

Nick>> Hi, everyone, and welcome back to the Never Chained Talk Show, a Life Without Limbs production. I am your host Nick Vujicic, and I am so excited that you joined me today, because we have a very, very special guest—someone that I have admired from a distance but also known for the last 20 years of my life, a personal inspiration to me and my family. We will get into that a little later, but talking about the Champions for the Brokenhearted Campaign in 2022 for Life Without Limbs, this March we will be sharing a message of hope to friends with disabilities.

I am so honored to be joined by our friend and mentor, Joni Eareckson Tada, one of the world's most powerful voices for disability advocacy. Although in 1967 a diving accident left her a quadriplegic, she emerged from rehabilitation with the determination to help others with similar disabilities, a fiery conviction to be a conduit and instrument in the Almighty's hand. As founder and CEO of the nonprofit. Joni and Friends Organization, she provides programs and services for thousands of special needs families around the world: Wheels for the World, preaching the Gospel; family retreats; and church programs that help the local churches worldwide integrate people with special needs into their weekly services.

Through Joni's talks, books, outwork, radio, and other media, she shares encouragement and the hope of Gospel with millions of people worldwide.

Joni, thank you so much, for speaking with us today. We are so excited! How are you?

Joni>> I'm doing great. Of course, I am always doing great when I have the chance to talk to you, Nick.

You have a disability. I have got a disability, but God's grace is so sufficient, is it not? And you know what? Despite what 55 years of quadriplegia, a lot of chronic pain, battles with cancer, I am doing pretty good!

Nick>> Joni. Literally, you are one of the most inspiring people in my life always will be a rock for my own mom, Dushka Vujicic, when she--to her surprise--gave birth to a limbless boy. Someone gave her your book.

She found the Joni movie that has gone around the world--back then--1982 to Australia!

It was your story that helped to give my mother incredible faith and strength. I will never forget when I was 19 meeting you and hugging your neck. We are "neck huggers" yes!

it was the most beautiful, unique hug I have ever had, but knowing that you are my hero, my mom's hero--my hero's hero, and then how God opened up the conversation where the same year that Joni and Friends Organization in California opened up the International Disability Headquarters Center, where Life Without Limbs, at that point we were only working out of a living room in a rental property with

three employees, and you and your team said, "Well, come along!" And in that interim faith, that generosity, that belief in Life Without Limbs (when I was a little "whipper-snapper" traveling and globe-trotting around the world), Joni, your support, your love, your prayers, your singing down the halls, your team's encouragement and prayers, we love you! And aaahhhhhh, we are thankful and blessed to have you on this show to talk about being a champion for the brokenhearted this month in regards to disabilities. Joni, would you please share a little bit of your testimony about your story and how you came to know the Lord Jesus Christ?

Joni>> I sure will, Nick, but let me say real quick, for our friends watching. When you came to our headquarters at Joni and Friends, you are right, your ministry was perhaps small. But, oh my goodness, one of the joys of my life is seeing how the Lord Jesus has used you globally to reach so, so many more people with the Good News of Jesus. You outgrew that little office space in our headquarters real fast. And I am so excited that you are now, you are at home down there in Dallas, Texas, and growing even still. Thanks, Nick, for the question about my story. Oh, my goodness, 55 years, I have lived as a quadriplegic. That means without use of my hands, or my legs, and I broke my neck in a diving accident when I was 17.

Funny thing, Nick, right before that diving accident, I I was waffling around with the Lord Jesus. I had accepted Him as my Savior. But was He my Lord? Oooo, well, I would do one thing with my boyfriend on a Friday night. and then quick, trying to confess it all on Sunday morning. And then before I knew it, I was already looking forward to the following Friday night. And I downward spiraled into sin, even as a Christian. I allowed myself to become enslaved to sin. And I remember, Nick, I remember praying a prayer right before I graduated from high school and right before I was to go off to college. I said, "Jesus, I am just--I am just embarrassing You to no end. I am making a shame of Your good Name. I am living like a hypocrite. I am enslaved to sin. Jesus, would you do something in my life?"

Anything! I give you full reign, full freedom to do whatever You want, to grip my life and turn it right side up because I do not want to live as a hypocrite. Nick, I prayed that prayer in April of 1967, and I broke my neck about three months later. And I remember lying paralyzed on a Stryker frame. It is kind of like a hospital bed, but it is a thin canvas sandwich, I was lying on for almost a year. I remember looking up into the ceiling and praying, "God, how in the world could you take me so seriously? If this is the way You answer a prayer, for a closer walk with You, You are never going to be trusted with another one of my prayers again!"

I was getting so upset. But over time, Nick, it was the prayers of good friends and they are coming to my hospital bedside and ministering to me, bringing in their guitars, singing, singing songs, bringing in their, you know, CDs and their--I do not know--their cookies that their mother would bake. And they just loved me, not like a cripple, not like an invalid, not even like a paralyzed person. They loved me as their

friend. And I think it was their love that began to soften my heart and get me seriously thinking about the Lordship of Christ in my life. Jesus had backed me into a corner. And after about 4 or 5 to

6 months of depression--I mean, suicidal depression--I wanted out! I wanted to be hopeful. I wanted to move beyond the discouragement of my new life situation as a as a quadriplegic. I needed joy in my life. And thankfully, again, it was those Christian friends who reintroduced me as it were, to the Lord Jesus. And over time, I slowly began to trust Him with the way He answered that prayer to be drawn closer to Him.

Nick>> Praise God! Joni, you out of all, the mouthpieces of God that is anointed, and have reached millions and millions of people-- that messaging of God meeting us in our pain and suffering--you have gone through a lot of trials, depression, facing that. Yet, through all of that you are the most joyous person I know. Like, I will never forget those months that we have had crossing wheelchair to wheelchair, and half the time you are singing, you are looking at me, you are encouraging someone else. Joni, for someone who is right now depressed or dealing with their trials, I mean, you candidly even mentioned off the cuff, you know, off your tongue right now--yes, cancer survivor as well. I mean, what have you not you faced and gone through yet Jesus being your spine of joy and that joy oozing out of you? How can you maybe encourage someone who does not know how Jesus could, at all, meet me in my suffering and allow joy to enter into you in that suffering?

Joni>> Well, that is going to be a pretty tough question to answer in 65 words or less, but let me try, because I know there are some viewers right now and listeners who are struggling with the kind of depression you just mentioned, and I resonate with that. But I would not--my bit of advice here-- I would not resist the depression. I would move into it. It is what I do every single morning when I am discouraged, when I am when my pain gets really hard. I wake up in the morning, and I think, "I cannot believe I have got to do this today." And it is just at times overwhelming.

But instead of resisting it, and instead of getting anxious about it or fearful about it or angry about it, I I walk into it. In the morning, usually wake up at about four o'clock in the morning and I lie there until my helper comes to get me up at 7:30 or 8 in the morning and during those hours, I enter into that pain. How can I say it? I do not resist it. I talk to it. I say to it, "Depression, pain, discouragement. you are not going to get the best of me because the Bible tells me in 2nd Corinthians 4:8, 'Though we are hard pressed on all sides, we are not crushed.' So, pain and depression, you are not going to crush me.

I'm going to walk right into you just as though I were either Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego, walking into the fiery furnace, and I am going to expect to meet Jesus in the middle of the flames." I know that Jesus is going to find me. And so, Nick, I take a deep breath. I chase away the anxiety with a Word of Scripture, such as I just shared, and I walk into that depression. I walk into that pain, and I expect Jesus

to meet me. And you know what? He has never failed me. When we wake up in the morning, needing Jesus Christ desperately, we find Him. Because what? In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5.

He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." In other words, "Blessed are you if you come to Me in empty-handed spiritual poverty because there I am ready to embrace you into My heart." And so that is how I start my day. That is the kind of advice I would give for our friends tuning in. Just grab hold of an anchor of Scripture, walk into the middle of that discouragement, or depression or pain and ask God to meet you in it, and wow! That said, He always does.

Nick>> Amen. Amen. I tell everyone that is, to me, in my perspective, more difficult to be in Joni Eareckson Tada's shoes because that 19 or 17, as a teenager, you knew how it was to have arms and legs and independency on that, and then losing the ability, plus all the pain and suffering and the magnitude of all that. I mean, I have got a pair of shoes in my closet in case God gives me arms and legs, but

[Joni laughing]

it is understanding that your joy is not just through that daily battle, in how to battle with that power of God. But I remember one of our favorite songs that you and I were singing one day down those halls was "Some

glad morning when this life is over, I will fly away!" Knowing that every day is a day closer to where our treasures are stored, which is in heaven, that you and I are going to get new bodies and how you are able to be used by God to help people not just face each day with that tenacious, disciplinary warfare with the Word with that joy. Joni>> It is so absolutely necessary.

Nick>> --saying with just a few more weary days ahead, and I will fly away. And Joni, we also heard that one of the first verses that someone gave you, in your walk at that time was 1 Thessalonians 5:18, which says, "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." And we are looking ahead to heaven and knowing that He is going to give us strength, one day at a time and holding onto Him. Thanksgiving! How do you learn to thank God after your accident in this? I know it is a loaded question in thanksgiving, and there is a lot that I know you can unpack, but when tragedy strikes, when you look at the last couple of years, where a lot of us have gone through a lot of different unexpected, unprecedented times, how did you learn to thank God after your accident?

Joni>> That is a great question. And again, I am sure there are some viewers right now who are struggling with this one because, "How do you thank God when you do not feel thankful?" Well, you mentioned 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us." You know, whenever God calls us to obey His will, He is going to give us the power to do it! And that Bible verse gives the key, "In everything

give thanks." It does not say, "In everything feel thankful." That is impossible! God would never ask that of us, but we can give thanks. We can push away the box of Kleenex, and we can take a deep breath, step out on faith and say, "I do not get it, God, but I am going to give You thanks." And the best way to do that is to start small. Just start small. Take 1 Thessalonians 5:18

at face value. Begin loosening your tongue, and mouthing the words of thanks, hoping that somehow God is going to be merciful, and fill your heart with the emotion that you are asking for--the emotion of true gratitude. Now, that is not hiding the hardness of an unthankful spirit when you do that. No.

You are desperately hoping for the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit. So, day after day, start small. Make it a habit of saying, "Lord, I am going to thank you for, um-- oh, I do not know--the fact that it is a beautiful, bright day outside. I could take a walk!"

Or "God, I am going to thank you for my friends. They are sticking by me for this difficult time. I said, "Lord, I am going to start small by singing every old Sunday School song I can remember.

I am going to give thanks that I can see, that I can feel above my shoulders, that I can sit up in a wheelchair, that I can wheel outside in the Rose Garden." I mean, these are small, honest ways of giving thanks, a conscious effort to do what Scripture tells you to do. And you know, we should do it because what James 1 says, "Just do not listen to God's word. Do it!"

And so we could listen to God's Word in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks." But when we do it, when we wrap our mouths around those words of thanks, God will be merciful. He will fill your heart with the feeling of gratitude, and you are not going to be hiding the hardness of an unthankful spirit.

You are going to be desperately hoping for the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit, and He will.

He will meet you there. He will eventually.

Eventually, He will give you that emotion of thankfulness as a reward for the obedience of giving thanks. And while we continue to let this run, I have got to ask my friend to wipe my nose. Catherine, would you help wipe my nose here? So, sorry. Keep talking. I'm listening!

Nick>> I love it! [laughing]

Nick>> Oh, Joni, I love you! Air neck hug!

Joni>> [laughing]

Nick>> Joni, I will never forget the conversations I have had with some of my first cousins about the existence of God, and even the hardening of some of their hearts because you and I know that God is a God of love. And if God is a God of love, though, that question is, "How can God ever let this happen?"

In fact, one of my cousins said, "Nick, it is your disability that convinces me that your God doesn't exist, for He doesn't make sense to me whatsoever." And when we learn Scripture, we know where pain comes from. It is not from God.

What the enemy tried to use for bad, God can turn into good. But for someone who does not believe at all in how much we have seen, it is not that we want them to see what we believe, it is we want them to believe in what we have seen, in the goodness of God. How do you answer that question, Joni, when someone says, "How could God—if there is a God—let this happen?"

Joni>> Well, that is another tough one in 65 words or less?

Nick>> Take more words. We have got all the time.

I do not have a wristwatch on, so we are good.

Joni>> Well, I think the first thing all of us have to do is realize how utterly, completely, irrevocably broken this world is. And because of that brokenness, because of our initial rebellion, against a good God, what can I say? Suffering and pain is just going to be hardwired into what it means to be human. It is just part of the human experience, our suffering and our pain. And when you really consider the gravity and the depth of sin, and what it means to have rebelled against the Holy God, He owes this utterly rebellious planet absolutely nothing. And as such, when you think about it, God would be totally just in allowing all sorts of unthinkable things to happen. But--but God, besides being just, is also merciful. And so in His mercy, God contains suffering. He holds it back. He restrains suffering, and thank the Lord that He controls it because if He did not, suffering would come barreling at us all uncontrolled. And Satan would make Job's of us all.

The world would be so much worse than it already is, so in a way, God is already being merciful in holding back more suffering from us. And what I like to say, Nick, is that--and when I look at my own disability, and I look at your limitations, and I think **God permits what He hates to accomplish what He loves**. Those are 10 short words that changed my life Nick. I remember when I started asking seriously the very question you just posed to me. And I started asking friends, Christian friends, the same friends who were praying for me, I asked them about, "How could God be good and let this happen to me?" And my one friend said, "Joni, God permits what he hates to accomplish what he loves." Now real quickly, think about it. And I invite our viewers just to just to think this through. Think about Jesus on the cross.

Think of all the things that led up to it: justice, murder, treason, torture; injustice, murder, treason and torture. How can any of that stuff be God's will? But yet God permitted these things (Injustice, murder, torture, treason), so that through the death of Jesus Christ on that cross, Satan would end up slitting his own throat and the world's worst murder would become the world's only salvation. So, there you have got God permitting something that He hates--His own Son's crucifixion--

in order to accomplish something that He loves, and that is salvation for the whole world through the Gospel message. And in the same way, Nick, God permitted what he hated in my life-- my spinal cord injury, my broken neck, my quadriplegia. He hates that kind of stuff. He hates birth abnormalities. He hates multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, Alzheimer's, autism, you name it. He hates this stuff. Yet, in this broken world, He permits what he hates to accomplish something that He loves.

And although He hated my spinal cord injury, oh my goodness, what has He not accomplished through it? Things that I love. The fact that he changed me through my disability. I am a different person. I am not the same selfish, headstrong, stubborn, rebellious Joni, that I was when I broke my neck. And I am no longer the hypocrite that I was when I was on my feet. And not only that, Nick--and you can understand this-- He has used my limitations to reach people with disabilities around the world with His Good News. So, he permitted what he hated (my disability) to accomplish something that He sure is loving. And that is a ministry to people all around the world. And to me, I am just so grateful for God's wisdom. I would never have asked for this spinal cord injury.

I do not think you would have asked for the birth abnormalities that left you without use of hands or legs, and none of us would ask for these things. But amazing things happen to our heart, and to our lives, and to people around us when people like you and me, people like our friends watching just say, "God, I do not like this. But I am going to believe You are permitting it--something that you hate in order to accomplish something that You love in my life."

So, I am on this journey to find out what that is. Oh, if we can but pray that prayer! The windows that God will open in our lives and the doors that will just fly open as well. Right?

Nick>> Amen. Amen. My favorite quote from you, Joni, is always going to be "He ruthlessly perfects those who who royally elects." And you have the faith to know that God can fully restore your body right now. You allow people to come and pray for you if that is what the Holy Spirit has put on their heart to lay their hands on body and get up and walk and try get out of that wheelchair. Yet, you also have this understanding that God in His sovereignty absolutely when we are His children, when you do not get a miracle, you can still be a miracle, and the light and love and joy and purpose and strength that is emanated, which is Christ, through a limbless or quadriplegic, limited body is the work of the Lord to

challenge those who think that, "Well, when I have the body, the this, the that, the job, the circumstances line up, and every 'the stars aligned' for me to be happy," it does not satisfy, and so that joy can only come from God, and God is using us as His broken vessels, Joni, to shine His light and love. And your decades and decades of work with painting, educating, and bringing awareness to churches. I mean, it all started back decades ago with the American Disability Act.

You have been with the Presidents, Condoleezza Rice, and bringing in the rights for disadvantaged abilities of people here in the United States of America. You were championing that, as a spearhead, pioneering that with the government of America, hand in hand on knowing how important it was to engage and encourage local churches to also reach out to people with disabilities and their families. The vision obviously stays the same, but there are many churches today, I think, believe that you would believe that they are still needing to get engaged and involved in the communities around them here in America, to really reach out to families affected with disabilities. How can we be the church to those with disabilities in our local community? What is the messaging and hope and vision that God has birthed through you and the ministry of Joni and Friends, the ministries there? How can we as a church engage and help reach out to all people?

Joni>> Well, that is another question that is pretty hard to answer in a short response. But I look at the life of Jesus. When I think of what the church should look like and how people with disabilities can fit into that picture, I look at Jesus, oh, my goodness.

You flip through the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And on every page, our Savior is hanging out with somebody who has got a handicapping condition. I mean, every page, He is hanging out with the disabled. It really irked the disciples because they thought, "Jesus, you are an important man with busy ministry priorities, and these are 'no accounts' here on the side of the road (blind beggars, what not), they should not be on your agenda." But Jesus just lobbed a hand grenade into that thinking and blew it to smithereens. And he pretty much says in Luke 14, "When you give a banquet, do not just invite your rich friends, your relatives, your neighbors, you know, people that you are comfortable with, people that you identify with, and people in your sphere of influence." No, He says, "Pull up the tent pegs in your thinking, and go beyond your comfort zones. Go out! Find people that you are not comfortable with-- the disabled, the lame, the blind, the poor.

Invite them into the banquet. Do this, and you will be blessed." And I think that that is the perfect example. If we want to be like Jesus in our churches, then let us hang out with the people that He hung out with. Let us reach out to the poor, the disenfranchised, the people who are marginalized on the edges.

Go out and find the disabled and bring them in. 1 Corinthians 12:20, says that "Those who seem to be weaker in the body of Christ, are really indispensable." I love that word, "Those who 'seem' to be

weaker." They are not actually weaker. They just seem to be weaker, and we are to reach out to them because when we serve their needs, you know, when the hand and the feet and the head are all working together in the body of Christ, one part supporting the other-- when we actually serve people with disabilities, we will discover that our sacrificial service really is quite normal. Jesus in Matthew 28 "came not to be served but to serve" and oh, what a sacrificial service His was. So, yeah, it might take a little bit more effort to reach out to that special-needs mother, single mother, who has got so many issues to deal with. And we might have to practice a lot of Christianity with our sleeves rolled up to meet her needs, where the rubber meets the road of her life. But when we do, we will be serving as Christ served. We will be sacrificing but yet, oh, what a glorious, normal Christian service. it really is. So, the best rule of thumb is to seek people with disabilities. "Go out," Jesus says. Just do not sit back and wait for them to pull up into that brand new handicap parking place. You just, you know, stripe painted on your parking lot at church. No, you go out and find them. Bring them in because you are in for a blessing in your church when you do.

Quick illustration. Not long ago, I was in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and I was speaking at a church there who has a thriving disability ministry. And I said to them, "How did you guys get started? I mean, the typical people in your church, the able-bodied people are so involved! How did you get them energized to reach out to so many people with disabilities?" And this is what they told me. They said, "You know, we used to have people with disabilities come to our Sunday morning service, and a few of them had cerebral palsy, and they would blurt out, they would shout out inappropriately at the wrong times. And it really bothered everybody. So, we decided that we would have a special worship service for these people in their families on a Wednesday evening.

Well, oh my goodness, that Wednesday evening service, called 'Joyful Praise' was so much hands-down, slam-dunk off-the-charts, over-the-top fun! People getting up and dancing and playing musical instruments and just so much raucous and joy and shouting, that before you know it, word started to spread. And all the typical people at our church began to hear about this fun time on Wednesday night. And they wanted to come and volunteer. And before you know it, our Wednesday night 'Joyful Praise' service was almost as full as our Sunday morning service because everybody got a new sense of what joyful praise and worship should look like and feel like, and it just changed the congregation." So, there you have it, those who seem to be weaker, are actually the ones that God uses to display his power and His joy in the worship service when we reach out to them. So, just a little lesson, a true-life example from that super church in Fort Wayne.

Nick>>Amen! And to all the viewers watching, please make sure you go to JoniandFriends.org because not only are they there to bring in education, awareness, but they resource, equip and train your church to actually go out and seek out and train volunteers at your church to open up the floodgates and open up the doors in the Luke 14 mandate that Joni was talking about. I believe there are a lot more churches out

there, Joni, that need to open up their doors that way as well. And also, your family retreat project and initiatives worldwide, where families with children with special needs come together and get to talk to other families who otherwise do not either have a church or that network or that community. Please, viewers go to JoniandFriends.org to check out how this ministry can equip and grow the church and the kingdom of God as you reach out into community, whether it is through a special needs program in your church, with your local chapter, or a family retreat there.

Joni>> We feel like we really need volunteers Nick, since you brought the subject up, let me just say that we are going to have 73 family retreats this year. I think it is 30+ in America, in the United States, and the balance of them in developing nations. And we really need extra volunteers to come and serve with us. So, take that Luke 14 mandate seriously and pull up the tent pegs in your thinking and come and volunteer, and you will be blessed right, Nick?

Nick>> Amen. Amen. And you mentioning about

you go there thinking you are going to be a blessing. Trust me, you walk away more blessed than you can ever imagine. And if you only--just experience of once. You do not understand what it means, what it is going to do for you in your relationship with God. In fact, even if you feel depressed, not just inadequate--depressed!

Joni>> Yes!

Nick>> It is one of their greatest gifts of all! So while you see someone else, like,

"They have exactly what I want!" and the Lord ministers to you, as you minister to others. Can you hear an Amen? Joni, Joni, keep going.

Joni>> Amen. Amen. You know, real quickly, one of the blessings that you will receive, and you mentioned depression, which, of course, whenever I talk to anybody who is depressed, I usually say, "You know what, get up tomorrow morning, shower, get dressed, eat your breakfast, go out the front door, and find somebody who is hurting worse than you are, and find a way to make it difference in their lives. And when we do that, we discover the beauty of 2 Corinthians 6:10 where Paul tells us that as Christians, we are supposed to be joyful, yet sorrowful at the same time. He says, "I am sorrowful, yet rejoicing; having nothing, yet possessing everything; I am made poor, but I am making many people rich."

We need to remember that for the Christian joy and sorrow are supposed to exist on the same continuum. We are supposed to experience them simultaneously. And I think hanging around somebody with a disability will show you that, will prove to you that, that there is such great, deep joy--not a frivolous joy, not a "skate-the-surface-of-your-life" joy, but a way down deep, profound, unshakable joy, that you

experience in your sorrow. That is such a miracle!! That is why my smile, and I know your smile, too, Nick. It is not put on by Colgate. It is something so profoundly deep, and our suffering or our limitations have helped shape that. And you can experience it at a family retreat, you really can. That is part of the blessing of going to a family retreat and serving.

Nick>> You can. You know what? Out of the monthly campaigns that we are doing with the Champions for the Brokenhearted, Joni, it just hit me while you are talking. Human trafficking and unborn, and all the other campaigns that we are doing monthly, let me just tell the viewers right now, it is something tangible in being put in a vulnerable place where you do not understand even the needs of the person, but you are there. And it is in that faith in being the hands and feet, coming from somebody with no limbs who needs help every day. It is a different kind of ministry, for everyone involved, who has the courage to say, "Yes!" to the Lord, and not just here in America, but if you even feel like, "Oh, one day, I want to go on a missions trip." Have you ever thought of doing a mission's trip for the handicapped internationally? Joni, real quick, on an international, global scale, what is one of your favorite stories that you know, Joni and Friends has changed forever the lives of people?--out of, I know, there are countless stories. I know it is such an ambiguous question, but but at the same time, are there any stories that you want to highlight today with our viewers?

Joni>> Oh my goodness, that is hard to pin down one. I am thinking of when I went to Romania, we had some extra wheelchairs and Bibles. And the pastoral team that had helped us organize our wheelchair distributions in Romania, suggested that we, "Take these leftover wheelchairs to the Gypsy village." We usually do not go into the gypsy villages, but perhaps there are some disabled people there. Well, when they said that right away, my ears perked up. And I felt like, "Well, then that is where we need to be." This is not a leftover thing.

This is this is someplace we should have probably gone at the very onset of our outreach. And so we went into this gypsy village, Nick, and I I went into this one house, and the stench was unbelievable. It broke my heart, and cockroaches on the floor, and I went into a back bedroom and there was a woman who had suffered a stroke 15 years earlier. Her name was Dedina, and she was in a bed as it were. But the bed was actually a sheet of Masonite. because she would soil herself. Obviously, she had a stroke. She could not help herself, and her precious mother, an elderly woman, it just was easier for her to clean her adult daughter on a Masonite piece of board.

So, she only had a blanket because she would soil her clothes, and so it was just easier to help this woman on a Masonite board, and I am thinking... I could barely tell the story without...and so we told her mother that we had a wheelchair for her daughter. Her daughter could not believe it. She had not been outside in the sunshine for 15 years. And when we dressed her, and my physical therapist with us,--God bless them for really practicing Christianity with sleeves rolled up--when they dressed her and

sat her up in the wheelchair, and we wheeled her outside, they had to shield her eyes, because she had not seen the sun for 15 years.

And we tilted back that wheelchair, and she was able to feel the sunshine on her face, and her words were, "Thank God for the sun." I am thinking to myself, "Fifteen years, laying on a piece of Masonite, poor, unreachable, ostracized, and your first words are, 'Thank God.'" To me, it was just a moment in which I rededicated, recommitted myself, "Jesus, Dedina--that was her name--Dedina is just one of millions around the world like her. Help me make a difference. Help me make a difference so that we can reach more people like her.

Nick>> Amen, Amen. Joni, we were so privileged to collaborate with Joni and Friends Ministry from Life Without Limbs over the years to do shipping containers to needy people internationally to the world. Please check out how you can help someone. Joni>> Yes, absolutely,

Nick>> ...who needs a wheelchair. Apparently, the World Health Organization says that still of the billion people with a disability, about 70 million today are still in need of a wheelchair. So, Joni, thank you, and thanking God, right now, for you and your team to really help meet those needs. You know, I want to share with everyone, Joni,

Genesis 50:20. Joseph says, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Joni, you have certainly done that. Even as you give out wheelchairs, you gave out wheelchairs in the name of Jesus, preaching the Gospel every single time so that they know that it is God who gets the glory, that God has a plan for their life, that we are going to pray for their disability to be healed. But we also have faith and trust and belief that if He does not change your circumstances, He is going to give us everything we need. The way that God has used your life for His glory, Joni, is more than words can express in thousands of interviews.

I want to know of all the hymnal songs that you love singing that you come to in the place of your mind. I think of the Joni when she first was in the stadium with Billy Graham. I think of the Joni that got to meet and advise President Ronald Reagan. I think of the Joni the day that she saw the final cut of the movie, Joni. I think of Joni when she saw the first copy of the first book of many, many books. I think of all those moments--that you got married to Ken Tada. Love him! I think of all the glory-of-God moments that you just like, "Thank You, Lord! Thank You, Lord!"

What if there is any song that you go back to, Joni, and just saying, "Thank You, Lord"?

Joni>> Well, I have memorized many, many hymns, and I think one of my favorites, but I often sing in the middle of the night, when I am in so much pain that I cannot quite put two sentences together in a

prayer. That is when it is so good to be able to default to a memorized hymn or Scriptures where you do not have to think. It just comes out naturally, and I think of that wonderful hymn, "Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art;

I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart, Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, as Thy beauty fills my soul, for by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole."

I could go on and on. But Nick, hymns are the musical score for my life. I mean to this day, when I wheel up the ramp of our giant field headquarters to the second floor of my office, I love going up that ramp and singing hymns. And I got to tell our viewers real quick, one of the highlights of my life regarding hymns, was being at your dad's memorial service. After the church service, we went to the grave side and all your many relatives. I do not know from Eastern Europe world, where all they came from New York City, New Jersey, I do not know.

But they were all gathered there. I know the beautiful four-part harmony that I heard and everybody knew these hymns by heart. And what a tradition, what a legacy of your family to probably even give you that strong reliance on favorite hymns. So, like you, I have memorized a lot of words to a lot of hymns, a lot of stanzas of beautiful hymns so that when I am having a hard time, putting two sentences together in prayer, I can fall back on those stanzas as my words of worship. I would encourage our watchers to do the same, our viewers to do the same.

Nick>> Amen. Joni, I swallowed my tongue at the memorial of my father's memorial service. I just was so speechless and so scattered in many, many ways. It was a difficult day, yet we know that we are celebrating his life and for you to be there. My dad loved you so much. And he was very reluctant to ever share his story, but meeting you and Ken and my parents spending time with you, opened up their hearts that the week that my dad finished writing his book about raising a child with a disability.

It was the week that he gave the manuscript, and then, after four years of trying to twist his arm to write a book, he finally did it. And then he found that that week he had cancer and the doctors only gave him 50 or so days to live. And I just thank God for you in our family's lives, our ministries, our growth! And you are incredible, a conduit of God that you have moved so many people's hearts. And I just wanted to tell everyone if you really need to move to something—

God is speaking to you right now, and you do not know what to do with this conviction. He is knocking on the door of your heart. First things, pray, and pray for Joni. Pray for Ken. Pray for Joni and Friends. Consider being a volunteer at one of those retreats or Wheels for the World. outreaches. Pray with even your youth pastor or pastor about a special needs ministry for your church that Joni and Friends Ministry can come and help train you all in. Joni, we love you so, so much. The website JoniandFriends.org, I am

sure, is the best place for people to connect with you and your ministry. And if there is anything else that you want to add or say to our viewers, before we say goodbye.

Joni>> Oh, absolutely, because maybe somebody is watching, and you have been holding Jesus at an arm's length distance. You have been keeping your Bible by your bedside table but not opening it much. You have been resentful of perhaps something God has allowed in your life. And you just do not think that Jesus is trustworthy. And I would just appeal to our friends watching right now, Nick, and I know you would agree. Put down those barriers. Let go of that resentment. No longer hold Jesus at an arm's length distance. He is the only One with Gospel hope that can alter-- literally transform--change your life. And it starts by bundling up all that pride, all that resentment, all that stiff-necked, stubborn

I-would-rather-do-it-myself itchiness to get your own way. Bundle it all up and put it at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ and kneel there in your mind's eye, in your heart. Kneel there and say, "Jesus, I give it up. I give it up. I cannot run my life on my own. It is not working. Nothing is making sense. I am tired of being sad." And then invite him to sit on the throne of your heart, not only a Savior from your sin, but as Lord of your life. If you would but do that, my friend, oh my goodness, you would have escaped from hell. You would have a home in heaven. You would have citizenship for all of eternity with the Lord Jesus. You would be his co-heir.

You would have a new name. You would have a purpose and a mission in life. You would have the assurance that all things would be working together for good in your broken life. Why not take part in that? Why not embrace him with your whole heart? And say yes to Jesus Christ. Nick, I know that you have a passion for evangelism. I think that is what I love most about you and your ministry. It is all about giving the Good News of Jesus. So, I am praying that some of our friends watching right now who might be reticent, and a little timid about yielding at all to Jesus, put it aside, and embrace him with your whole heart. And just start walking in the light of His Word.

What a difference that will make in your life!

Now that you have a safe home in heaven, and your name is written in His Lamb's Book of Life. Cannot wait for that day, Nick! You will get arms and legs. I will get hands that work. And we will have new, glorified bodies! We want to jump up, dance! We will kick to aerobics! We are going to have such a party, and we want to invite everybody else to that party, right?

Nick>> That is it. It is as simple as that, Joni. We are going to be doing a separate message where I look right into the camera to present the Gospel message that will be shared among friends and churches and going worldwide. But for our viewers right now, in our interview here, would you please close this off in prayer as God leads.

Joni>> I would love to. Oh, Jesus. I do trust Jesus, that somehow, some way, our conversation has delighted you, has filled your heart with joy! Nick, and I and I daresay, our viewers, we want to make it our ambition to be pleasing to You. And we pray that we have done that in the last hour, as we have spoken of the glory and the greatness of Your Gospel, the sacrifice you made on the cross, how you fit everything together into a pattern for good, how you permit awful things to happen in order to accomplish great, good in our lives; how you intend things for good, although the devil might intend them for evil, You intended for good for the saving of many lives.

And so we thank You, Jesus, for the way that we have been able to honor You and bless You during this time together. And I pray that our watching friends experience that same blessing. Would you cause it to overflow into their hearts? Father, give them the same joy that I know Nick and I are experiencing in our hearts. Affirm it, confirm it in them, Lord Jesus. And I pray that again, if anybody does not know You who is watching, may this be their day of reconciliation. May this be the day where they embrace You as Lord and Savior and start walking toward a life more abundant. I pray that in the powerful name of Jesus, the matchless name of Jesus, the name of the undisputed Lord and Champion of the universe, Jesus. Amen.

Nick>>> Amen! Joni, thank you so, so much and give our love and greetings to Ken and the rest of the team at Joni and Friends.

Joni>> I sure will. We love you, Nick. Bye-bye.

Nick>> Bye-bye.