

Nick>> Hi, everyone, and welcome back to the Never Chained Talk Show, a Life Without Limbs production. I am your host Nick Vujicic, and we are so glad that you have decided to join us. This year's "Champions for the Brokenhearted" campaign, where each month we are talking about a topic. This month we are sharing encouragement for friends with disabilities.

Last week we had the privilege of speaking with Joni Eareckson Tada, and today we have the exciting opportunity to be connecting with one of my friends, Bethany Hamilton. Bethany taught me how to surf in 2010. She showed me how to put my arms out like this [shoulders forward] and find the balance, and we had exciting conversations together, and, let me tell you, she personally inspired me, and inspired millions of people all around the world. At the age of 13, she lost her arm in a shark attack, but that did not stop her. A month later she returned to the water to swim, and two years later—get this—she won her first national title--with one arm missing.

Today she is an internationally recognized, professional surfer who has spoken around the world to encourage others to live a life of courage and faith. She is also the author of the book Soul Surfer that was adapted into a film—an incredible film, a favorite of my children, and it was done in 2011, called Soul Surfer. And she is the subject of a 2018 documentary called Unstoppable. Today she joins us from Kawai, where she lives with her beautiful husband and beautiful family, three sons. Bethany, truly, is unstoppable, and it is such a joy to have her join us right here today, and I just want to say, Bethany, it is an absolute honor—excited to do this together where we get to share your story here, a part of the Champions for the Brokenhearted series. Bethany, welcome!

Bethany>> Aloha, everyone! Hi, Nick! So good to be here with you!

Nick>> Oh, Bethany, I love you. I miss you! Three sons, a hubby, and you are loving life, and it is all because of Jesus! We all know that. I just want to say, "Thank you for being a champion for the brokenhearted, Bethany!" We love you.

Bethany>> Yeah, no, I am super thankful for life and all that the Lord has blessed me with, and yeah, I would say, definitely in the season I am in right now with my children is so awesome, and so much fun. They are definitely my high of every day. I usually finish the day talking to my hubby about how cute they were or how challenging they were, but—one or usually both—and I am just so grateful for life!

Nick>> Love it, Bethany! Look, we know that a ton of people already know your story. But we are also, obviously, translating this in many, many languages, and it is also globally, hopefully, going to be introducing you to other people around the world—your story, your ministry, and your heart for God. Bethany, I would love to, first of all, ask this question, "How did you first come to know your faith in Jesus and your love in God?" I want to know how could you tell anyone who may not even have a faith in God. How did you come to your faith in God?

Bethany>> Yeah, so growing up, I grew up with Christian parents and there is a verse in the Bible—I do not have it memorized—but it talks about having childlike faith, and I think so often we look at children, and we are like,

"Oh they do not get it. They do not understand, like, what faith is." I do not know. I totally tend to disagree with that because the Lord tells us to come to Him like a child. And I think children have some of the greatest faith, and so, I think, as a young girl, I just believed. I trusted that God loves me, and I knew that I was His daughter. And so, thankfully, my mom was a super mom. She always read the Bible to me, and I always say to other moms that the best ONE THING you can do for your children is just read the Bible to them and pray with them because that is what my mom did. Maybe she was not, like, perfect and she did not have it all together at all times, but she had a heart to share the Lord with me. So as I was growing up in my childhood, I remember praying with my mom around age 13. I was a very competitive surfer.

I loved riding waves and being out there in the ocean. I thrived in that environment, but I also loved God, and I was just pretty exuberant for life. And my mom and I were praying that surfing would not be my idol or that it would not be my #1 focus in life and that I could honor God somehow with my life. And this was a very specific prayer, and it is pretty cool because less than 2 weeks later after we started praying the same prayer was when I lost my arm. And my mom and I were like, "Wait, that was not what we had in mind, Lord." That is not part of the plan. That is not what we would have chosen necessarily.

But with that being said, both my mom and I had a sense of peace that the Lord was in control of the situation, and He—you know, I survived the day after losing over 60% of my blood, and the long journey to even get to the hospital. I just trusted that the Lord had more for my life. Even though I did not know—like my world fell upside down. I thought one of my dreams to be one of the best female surfers in the world had been taken away, and I just, like, life felt chaotic, and then, I remember waking up in the hospital and there are all the lights, noise, and just sterility, and I look and I realize, "Wow! My arm is gone." But with that, I felt like so much more was gone. And even though it was chaotic, I still had this sense of peace, and gratitude, and thankfulness just to be alive, and that the Lord spared my life, and even though I did not know what my future was going to look like, I just chose to trust in the Lord and keep moving forward.

Nick>> That is amazing! You know, some people--Bethany, first of all, I always tell people, it is worse to absolutely have a limb and then lose it than to be born without limbs. That change at such an age--what a crisis, what a chaos, what a life-changing moment. That peace, though, that you are describing was real for you, and you held onto God, just like you said, and you had a peace, and you felt like He was still in control, and you are glad that, you know, you are still here. That is huge! Bethany, did you feel like God spoke to you? You know, it is like when you did—must have asked God like, "Why?" or

“What?” or did He give you something to hold onto—a verse? Did you ever ask like, “God, how could this be?”

Bethany>> Yeah, I think like a few verses come to mind. John 16:33, “I have said these things to you that in Me you will have peace. In the world you will have trouble, but take heart I have overcome the world.” Or “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path,” or Psalm 56:3, “When I am afraid, I will trust in you.” There is so much in God's Word that speaks truth to our life. And I think when we are going through something hard, to hear His word is the most important thing, because I naturally did, like, immediately think, “Okay, Lord, You are in control,” but hearing His Word from friends and family, it definitely brought more peace to the situation.

And I just think there is so many things that can come to mind when we are going through a hard time, and our mind can spiral into weird thinking patterns. But when we have the Lord's Word on our mind and heart, like, we are going to tend to trust in His Word instead of, like, the thoughts that may come to our minds. And so, I personally do not have like the best memory, but I am working on trying to memorize more versus just to, like, protect my mind from the thoughts that the world may bring to my life, or now as a mother. Actually, my boys and I were talking about John 16:33, the verse I first shared with you. In Me you will have peace. “In this life, you will have trouble, but take heart. I have overcome the world.”

And I was working on that with my boys, because I want them to grow up knowing God's Word and that they can let His Word lead them instead of, like, the words of the world that can penetrate the mind and kind of steal from us and bring lies our way. And I think so often we can fall victim of the lies, instead, just looking to God's Word to lead and guide us is so important. And that is what my mom taught me, you know. Even though I may not have understood all the verses, and all the Bibles, and maybe I zoned out a little bit while she was reading as a teenager, but I still heard some of it, and she still did her best. And that set me up for that moment of craziness and chaos. And it is pretty cool to “fast forward” to now and I get to do the same for my children.

Nick>> For sure. Now, that is amazing. It is miraculous. Bethany, an interesting question. If you had 30 seconds with yourself back then, right after the accident, and you could go back and tell 13-year-old Bethany something, what would it be?

Bethany>> I would just simply say that the Lord is your stronghold. And there is if there is ONE THING to trust Him and His Word and that His grace is sufficient for you. And I hope that you can rely on that, and all that you are going to face and just kind of keep it simple.

Nick>> Yeah, for sure. Look, me being born without limbs-- I know that the dynamic of a family when I was born without limbs, I am the only one in the family with this disability--How did the family dynamic change for you, now looking back, maybe now that you are older, with your siblings? You

know, there are many people watching that have a disability or have a sibling with a disability, where one member of the family perhaps has more of a spotlight and attention. Were there any tension or family dynamics that you would want to share about that, and any advice for families affected with disabilities on that note?

Bethany>> I would just encourage anyone listening to get really good at communicating so that you can express your needs and just be more open. My family was super understanding, and they actually were really great at just adapting to my situation and my differences and they did not really like baby me much. And not that I did not ask for help sometimes and that they did help me at times, but they gave me like kind of the appropriate space I think to figure things out on my own. And so that was really special. I was just encourage anyone who has maybe some differences to know that you can adapt, and you can make the most of your situation.

You do not have to be a victim of your differences. And you can still live a fulfilled life, especially when you know the Lord and have Him a part of your journey, you are going to be able to overcome so much more and live in peace and joy and contentedness and that you do not have to believe the lies about your situation, and that you can just overcome even more than you believe you can. I mean, I think because of my mindset, I really like chose to make the most of what I had. And I chose to push through hard things, I think, especially being a surfer, you paddle out in the ocean, and the ocean is not going to be easier on me than it is on my best friend. And so I was immediately in this, like, even game field or playing field where the ocean would just sometimes just feel like it was sending me back to the beach. And I had to really like reach deep inside and push through that physical pain.

And to get back out to the outside of the waves and go catch another good ride. So, I learned a lot being out there in the ocean that just perseverance and pushing through physically and mentally. And also believing in myself and trusting that I can overcome the hard things that come my way. So, I think I had this really cool meld of not only my faith in God, but this, like, physical challenge. And I think it is really good for all of us to have different challenges that we have to like work through physically, whether it is like, I am going to go swim 20 laps in the pool, and I am not going to stop until I get that done! Or something like that, you know, like, kind of creating your own challenges. But I know everyone's in different places, but I just love doing healthy things that also challenged me. And I feel how they translate into the day-to-day life.

And so I just think like being in tune with your mind and where it is going and how you perceive yourself. Perceive yourself as someone who can adapt. Perceive yourself as someone who can overcome. Perceive yourself as someone who is loved and cherished by God, and then you can live in those things, and you can move forward with that mindset.

Nick>> Love it. Love it. Bethany, as you started allowing God to use your story that did go global--that media attention-- that was for those of us who have read your book in and understand a little bit more

about you than the first time--that attention talking about mindset and challenges-- but from the other perspective of, "Wow, I am being used by God to share the story of what has happened to help other people," which is incredible. But how do you keep humble, Bethany? How does God keep you grounded with that pressure from not just surviving or enduring the difficulties in your mindset? But the other kind of pressure where, "Oh, wow, this is big! This is bigger than I thought or ever had imagined!" How did you straddle that and overcome that pressure and handle that?

Bethany>> Yeah, no, it was really hard. I think that was harder for me, then, like the actual physical change that I was facing, like, I really did not like attention. I did not like being in the spotlight. But I also look at my 13-year-old self. And one of the first things I said when I was still in the hospital was, "Maybe God will be able to use my story to encourage others." And so, I think I had this heart for others ever since I was younger.

And with that, I think I had a willingness to, like, bear the challenge and bear the burden, so to say, even though it is a beautiful one and, like, so much good has come from being willing to share my story and being a reminder to others who are going through dark times that they can get through it and that they can overcome and that they have a God that loves them. And so yeah, it was, like, a little bit of a, like, rocky journey. I would not (bipolar is not the right word), but it was like a love-dislike relationship. Like, on one hand, I really wanted to help others. But then on the other hand, I wanted to go hide out in the ocean and be away from any kind of camera or interviewer or writing a book or something like that. I think, like, I had our pastor friend helped me write my first book, Soul Surfer.

And I, in my intention span was so short as a teenager that he would get maybe like 10 to 15 minutes out of me, and then I would like disappear. So, I had a lot of help but and we got some cool things put out there. But like, it was a tough journey. And then now in my adult life, I think I am better at just balancing out all the opportunities, and I feel, like, you could, depending on your, like, personality and your ability to handle all of it. Like, I can only do so much. so I try not to overdo it. And I know when I am overdoing it because I will "get short" with my family or just feel tired. And so I try to, like, pay attention to my signs, and just slow down if I feel like I am doing too much and getting kind of burnout.

And so I am very, like, protective of how much I am giving because my first place of giving is with my husband and my children, and that needs to be, like, my daily priority. And so, and then I will try to find other things, other ways to give when I have the extra energy, and kind of just plan it out good, and I really--yeah. It has been really amazing to see all the good and beauty that has come from something that seems so awful, and being able to share my story and encourage others. And I believe we can all share our stories. Maybe it is not in a book or a movie. But just being a mentor and sharing with the people around you. There is so many people that are hurting and going through pain. And I think our culture, at least in America, has lost this sense of, like, communicating our overcomings and our trials, and our young people really need these open voices in their life to share what they have been through so

that they can take what, you know, the old elders in their life have been through, and find inspiration in that.

And, you know, I have never been one to idolize or celebrate people on a pedestal. But more just see them for who they are and what they have been through and how they have overcome, and kind of "cherry pick" certain aspects of their life that are really remarkable, and glean off that. and it is pretty---but I think, like, yeah, I think there is this need for close communication and mentorship, and just encouragement beyond what we are doing now. And I am hoping to create more avenues in that realm. In fact, that is kind of where I want to go with the next question. This is awesome. Look, you have won national championships, and you face some of the toughest competition in the world all while still getting married, raising your family and encouraging others with what you have learned. What are you up to now, and what is the next goal for your surfing career? Tell us more about what is in the pipeline for you.

Bethany>> Yeah, well, if anyone here does not know too much about my story, so, now I just turned 32. And I am a mother of three beautiful little boys. And this year in 2022, I just did some of my biggest surf contests. So, I am still like surfing professionally. Yeah, so "long story short," I went from, like, a young little teenager, lost my arm, thought I lost my dreams, but then I continued surfing and eventually went on to be professional. And it has been a really cool journey because I just have a really deep passion for riding waves and pushing myself out there. I am very like athletic and competitively driven.

And so, I have been able to continue doing that but also still share my story and encourage young people and now be a mom, and it is really a lot of joy. And thanks to my husband and to the Lord, we are able to do really special things. And so, I kind of just--I am in this season where I am not sure exactly what I want to do, but I am very passionate about healthy living. So, just taking care of my health as a mom so that I can better serve my family and then that also helps me to keep surfing and ripping it up and having fun out there. And my 6-year-old likes surfing. So, after I am done with this call, I might take him down to the beach and "get him some waves" because he did not surf the last few days, and he might be getting a bit antsy. And, yeah, just kind of taking whatever the Lord brings our way, but trying to....

I am working towards creating mentorship programs. I am currently doing one for mothers and daughters. And these moms, the goal is to open their relationship and help equip the mothers to have better communication with their daughters to inspire them to know and love the Lord, to equip them to be healthy, to have good communication. And I think this is a worldwide podcast. But America is definitely infiltrated by social media on a really deep level, and a lot of, like, influences through kind of weird avenues. And so our young people are being attacked by a lot of weird things that are really bringing them down.

And I hope to help bring light in a lot of these areas and equip the moms to be the number one voice in their daughter's life so that they can grow up and go to their mom first, instead of some, like, random

person that might not have their best interests at hand. And so that is been a really cool journey because I never thought of myself as, like, I mean, like, I am a mom, but I love talking to young people like teenagers and young adults. And so, it is been cool that I bring in the moms and talk with both of them and kind of have this unique conversation.

Nick>> I love it. I love it. Bethany, out of all the people that you have met around the world who came up to you crying, hugging you, saying that your story was a blessing to them, is there one story of the thousands-- I am sure, tens of thousands--that, I mean, you got to meet a lot of those people who really come up to you, and you have changed their life. I mean, God use your story to change their life. Is there a story or a testimony that you want to share about that we can we can all be, like, "Oh my goodness, that is awesome. Yeah, God!"

Oh, man, there is a lot! I have not the best memory, so, I kind of forget a lot of things, but some that stood out to me-- and I think that is partially why I really love like teenager girls, as they are just under so many weird pressures. And there is been a couple of young girls who were in the hospital suffering from anorexia to the extreme. And it is so sad that they could get to that point. But then they heard of my story. And somehow my story inspired them in their dire situation to overcome and find a healthy relationship with themselves in their body, and hopefully the Lord, more importantly, to know their worth and their value and beauty and that they have purpose in this life. And they have come full circle and overcome their hard things. And, you know, it is so weird to me, because I am, like, I am just a surfer!

Like, I am just, you know, decided to get back out there, even with one arm and like, how could that story translate to a situation like that, but it has just been so cool. And even, you know, when I was younger, I would get like letters from inmates and, like, things across the board, children in the hospital dying of sicknesses, and so many of these different things that I am, like, how does my story translate? But, I think, ultimately people are attracted to the Lord and His light in my life. And, you know, when I think back, you know, I started our conversation with sharing John 16:33. "In Me you will have peace. In this life, you will have trouble but take heart, I have overcome the world." And that verse, what does that mean for us? It is--there is so much chaos and unrest in the world, and we are all craving this peace. And I believe that only God can bring us that peace. And it is because Jesus died on the cross and overcame all sin, death and evil on our behalf. And so that is how we overcome, because He has overcome for us, and so when we face things in life that are really hard and painful and challenging, we have this overwhelming peace and hope that, "Well, the Lord already provided a way, and He said that this life will be hard.

But one day we will overcome it all." And He has already overcome it all, and that is like our continual peace through the challenging times. And so that is how I have gotten to where I am, and I continually overcome the challenges that come my way. whether it be motherhood or facing--seeing the things going

on in the world, and knowing that, "Well, my hope is not in the world or myself, it is in God, and I am able to trust in him through it all."

Nick>> I love it. Praise God, Amen. And amen. Bethany, I know that your youth minister, Sarah Hill, played a huge role in your life. What is the importance of finding other people to support you as you face challenges from your disability and in your walk with Jesus Christ? It is such an important piece for me in this interview, because we know that sometimes we do not even have strength to pray ourselves, right?

There are times where we go through depression or times of loneliness. We do not even know how to pray, or even have the strength to pray. What importance and role do you think that we, as people watching you, should really consider for ourselves when we are going through a deep valley, and the importance of walking with someone through that?

Bethany>> Yeah, I think community is essential. And as a young woman, I had my youth group and my youth minister, Sarah Hill. And I also had a really great group of friends that I had chosen, who also trusted in the Lord, and these things, all these people, were people that were there for me in that dark hour. And so, I think taking the time to find our community today, what it looks like, for me-- my family, my friends, my church group, people that have my best interests at hand. My church is amazing.

Our pastor is a wonderful man who is always professing the Gospel, and the law every Sunday, so that wherever we are at, whatever we need to hear, we hear it both. We hear the love of the Lord, and we hear God's Word. And so, choosing our church wisely-- I have friends who celebrate me, but they also celebrate marriage. They are cheering me on to have the best marriage I can to trust in the Lord through motherhood and having strong mothers that are cheering me on to overcome the challenges that come my way in these areas.

I think is so key, and then just having communities. Yeah, I know, my mom is still praying for me. My friends are praying for me and people that, like, love me and know me, and know what I am going through, are that I can trust, that will lift me up when things are hard. And yeah, even looking for, you know, pastoral kind of counseling and encouragement, I think is important, too, because sometimes there is things that we just need someone else to come and speak on, and so, over the years, I have sought after that sort of thing, too. And, yeah, life is always going to be throwing challenges our way, and we have to do it with others. We were meant to live in community, and so finding our community to, not only be encouraged by, but also to be an encourager as well.

Nick>> Awesome, awesome. Bethany, there is someone watching you right now, from around the world who has a disability, who feels alone, who feels alienated, who feels like God has forgotten them. Encourage that person right now.

Bethany>> Oh, I would say that if you feel like God has forgotten you, you are believing in a lie because the Lord is the one, steady, loving, consistent thing in this life, ("Thing" is probably not the right word.) But He is the one that forever has your best interests at hand. And so I would encourage you to seek His word to speak truth over whatever thoughts you are struggling with, and to know that He calls us to think on the good and beautiful things, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, just, pure, whatever is lovely--to think on the things that are commendable, and if there is any excellence or if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things.

And God calls us to think on His Word and on the beautiful things that He has provided for us. And we do not have to believe in the lies, and we do not have to be victimized by our situation either. We can make the most of what we have got. And we can adapt and overcome our challenges that continually come, and we can live in hope and peace. And so I would just encourage you to seek community, seek the Lord, seek His Word over your thoughts, and be willing to change your mind. If you are in a dark place you can let go of those thoughts and move forward in beautiful communion with the Lord.

Nick>> In fact, Lord Jesus right now, we thank you, for our viewers. We ask, God, that you would bless them, and help them to know that You still have an incredible plan for them, and give us strength one day at a time. Surround us with that community and give us, Lord, your promises and the Word that we can hold onto the Bible, of knowing that You are with us, and we can overcome all challenges as we trust in You. In Jesus name. And all God's people said, Amen. Bethany, two real, last questions--a fun one, and then a connecting one. Bethany who inspires you? I mean, you are an incredible athlete. The Olympics, right? The Winter Olympics this quarter, 2022 happening in China? Is there anyone else who really inspires you?

Bethany>> Oh, my goodness. Yeah. Honestly, like, I would just say my mom. My mom inspires me in a lot of ways--just the way she loves others and how serving she is. And she is someone that I live in close quarters with, so I am around her a lot, and I just really appreciate her so much. And she has been such a light in my life. So, super grateful to just glean off her and she has just always been encouraging me to and pointing me towards God's Word. And I would say that is my number one person and my husband and just my friends in my community, I would say these are the people that have the greatest influence on my life, and are my greatest encouragers.

Nick>> I love it. Praise God. Say hello to you, ma for me. Bethany, how can our viewers learn more about your courses and what you are up to? How do they best connect with you?

Bethany>> Yeah, I guess the world of Google, you can just Google search Bethany Hamilton. You will find my website there. And yeah, it has been such an honor to talk with you, Nick. I always love just hearing from you and seeing you, and you are just such a light. So, thanks for having me today. And keep up the amazing work to inspire the world and point them towards the Lord.

Nick>> Bethany, I appreciate you, and we love you very, very much. And you keep on keeping on with anything that God has called you or convicted you to do. May God bless it continually in Jesus name. And, sister, I am so inspired by you and we love you. We are cheering you on. And thank you so much for joining me today on on this episode for people with disabilities being a champion for the brokenhearted. Bethany, you are a champion for the brokenhearted. We love you.

Bethany>> Thank you, Nick. Aloha, everyone. Love you. Thanks.

Nick>> Love you. Thanks.