The Joy of Jesus at Family Retreats
Read Alessia's story inside!
Back in 2017 when Patricia, a single-mom, brought her son, Nathan to our New Mexico Family Retreat at Lone Tree Ranch, they had no idea what to expect. Her beloved husband had passed away, and it was their first time to attend anything like this. They needed to move forward into life, and so, as Patricia drove up the dusty road to the ranch, she hoped it would happen here for her son with Down syndrome. And for her, too, she nervously breathed.

Neither she nor Nathan were disappointed. Whether rock-climbing, square-dancing, horseback riding, or zooming down the waterslide, Patricia was there, cheering on her boy. She was thrilled to see a budding friendship grow between her precious Nathan and Dylan, his Short-Term-Missionary (STM). She fought back tears whenever she saw them doing fun guy-stuff. “Nathan doesn’t have a lot of friends,” she said, “and Dylan has made my son feel loved. He’s such a great role model for Nathan!”

“Families like ours desperately need this,” Patricia half-whispered, looking through wet eyes around the busy dining hall. She’s right. Many of the families who attend are single-mothers with their disabled young ones and siblings – these valiant parents battle social isolation and deep fatigue from bearing burdens alone. But at Family Retreat, weary hearts are transformed by the Lord Jesus, and families leave with fresh faith and new hope. Honestly, your gifts and prayers are a life-line for them. So, thank you for standing in the gap for these needy parents and kids... especially big, lovable kids like Nathan!

“Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely You will hear their cries and comfort them.”

Psalm 10:17

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.”

John 13:34-35
You Sent Joy, Hope, & Jesus’ Love

International Family Retreat

Joy Overflowing at International Family Retreat—Thanks to You!

The day to day realities of caring for a disabled child is often overwhelming. Isolation and fatigue can rip even the strongest families apart. Medical and economic challenges can weigh down hard on the hearts of the parents. And often, there are feelings of hopelessness. But at International Family Retreat, families find Jesus’ joy, hope, and love! Meet Alessia, who lives with cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, who recently came to Retreat with her parents and brother. Alessia and her family experienced true spiritual renewal and the joy of Jesus at International Family Retreat!

Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you... have refreshed the hearts of the Lord’s people.

Philemon 1:7

You gave Alessia and her family much to praise Jesus for as they felt loved and embraced by everyone and built memories that will last for years to come!

At International Family Retreat, kids with disabilities discover a whole new world of possibilities! Alessia sings a song to a crowd joyfully cheering her on at Talent Show Night!
God is using you to pour out His love to families living with disability. One such family is the Fernandez family who recently came to a Family Retreat in New Mexico. Di and Alicia came with their daughters. One of their daughters, Savannah, lives with Cornelia de Lange syndrome. It's normal for these parents to feel overwhelmed and alone when taking care of a child with a disability. It's hard work and many people simply don't understand what life with disability really entails. Parents are often pushed to the limit when they arrive at Family Retreat in need of Jesus’ love and hope.

“We were so broken before we came, but now we have hope. It’s the first step in getting help. Your family’s life will be changed, and you’ll never be the same!” Alicia told us. The entire family developed deep connections and friendships during the week with other families and their volunteer Short-Term-Missionaries (STMs). Husband Di added, “Family Retreat is love. It’s a beautiful place with beautiful people.”

Thank you for transforming the lives of families challenged by disability through your prayers and providing scholarships! You’re investing in kingdom ministry and in families living with disability who need the hope of Jesus!

Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

Galatians 6:10

You’re Encouraging and Holding Families Together with The Love of Jesus at Family Retreat!
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Richard Cunningham

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David and Delores Claassen

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STEVE FRANKS
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Robert and Cora Clemens Jr.
Toby and Susan Clemishere
Richard Davis
Bobby and Laurie Guinn
Sharon Helm
Andi Holt
Ted and Kathy Josephson
Morris and Carol Lewellyn
“Man in the Mirror”
Judy Mihalko
John Mooney
Sally Penney
Edie Pitstick
Sally Puth
Meg Rink

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Debra Prins

DAVID RETTMANN
Joette Bowden

PRAY WITH US TODAY!

We invite you to join us in praying for families that deal with disability every day.

This year, Joni and Friends will hold 77 U.S. Family Retreats and 38 International Family Retreats.

Thank you for your faithful prayers, financial support, and for investing in Christ’s eternal kingdom!
Have You Heard?
Joni and Friends has a new podcast!
Each podcast episode features biblical encouragement, resources, and practical ways for you to reach out to people impacted by disability in your community. You won’t want to miss an episode. Listen today!

Featured Podcasts Topics
Disability Etiquette- How to build genuine friendships with people impacted by disability
Do you have questions about disability etiquette? You may have heard the “do’s and don’ts” of communication and interaction, but is that what someone with a disability is really looking for?

Love, Marriage, and Disability
In the middle of his successful career in the biotech industry, Kevin Stark unexpectedly became a quadriplegic. A few years later, he met his lovely wife, Jamie, and they fell in love. They share what it really means for any couple to say “for better, for worse…in sickness and in health…till death do us part.”

How Disability Impacts Everyone in the Family
You don’t really know a person until you’ve heard their story. For so many families impacted by disability, that story includes unique challenges and demands that can be exhausting and relentless. Responsibilities are often 24/7 in order to meet the needs of a child, spouse, or grandparent with a disability.

Subscribe to the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast at joniandfriends.org/podcast

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