The Power of Jesus is on display at our Marriage Getaways!
Many people look at photos of Ken and me and say, “Look at them, they’re always smiling... what a happy couple!” In one sense, they are right. Ken and I are very happy. But our smiles do not come easily. Even now, after almost 40 years of life together, the joy in our marriage is vigorously hard-fought for. Ken and I may casually say to one another, “I love you,” but my quadriplegia keeps demanding that we prove it.

Marriage-love is proved in the middle of the night when Ken must get up for the fourth time to help me cough or blow my nose when I’m sick. For other families with special needs, marriage-love is proved when dad comes home tired from work yet drops everything to tend to their disabled child so mom can take a breather.

Husbands and wives are constantly dealing with insurance hassles, back pain, feeding tubes, burn-out, hospital visits, shortage of help, toileting routines... and when it comes to their child with a disability, behavior challenges, school absence, and sibling rivalry. It’s constant... it’s isolating... and a threat to everyone’s sanity.

In sharp contrast with our culture, the Bible teaches that the essence of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other. That means that love is more fundamentally action than emotion.

TIM KELLER

Oh, how Jesus is needed! When couples cast their cares on him, they find hope, strength, and a deeper love for Christ and each other. The grace of Jesus empowers a husband and wife to keep love at the center, even when disability feels overwhelming. Can you see why Joni and Friends Marriage Getaways are essential? Where else will these isolated families hear the Gospel of our Savior?

When you support our Marriage Getaways, you are helping couples discover strength in Christ through their most devastating weaknesses. Disability may expose how desperate needs are, but a Marriage Getaway shows couples where true marriage-love is found... always in our Lord Jesus.
Marriage Getaways
Save Marriages & Strengthen Families!

When Jeff and Ericka first heard about our Marriage Getaways, their marriage was hanging on by a thread. “I was so done with him,” confides Ericka. “He said he was a believer, but his actions did not show it. I felt so unloved by him.” Ericka had already begun the legal process of divorce. “I was on my way to losing her,” remembers Jeff. “I prayed I would not get divorced again, but I was so convicted and felt unloved by Christ.” Yet Jeff was committed to make this marriage work. Jeff and Ericka had both already been divorced. When they got married, Jeff became an instant first-time father to Ericka’s two children. Then they had Sage, now 18, who has autism. Disability, divorce, and ongoing patterns of sin added heavy burdens to their relationship. Jeff admits he was “distant as a husband.” And Ericka recalls, “I’d made up my mind. I definitely wanted a divorce.”

But when Jeff learned about our Marriage Getaway for couples impacted by disability, he was determined to attend even if Ericka refused. Surprisingly, she agreed to go, and what happened there was nothing less than an all-out miracle.

“It was amazing! Instantly, we connected with our coaches, Pastor Darrell and Donnell,” shares Ericka. “After we prayed with them it was this immediate feeling of trust, and we both let it all out. It was like a switch flipped in us.”

DJ, the youngest of Darrell and Donnell’s five children, has Down syndrome. They understand the very real challenges that come with being a special needs family. They also clearly remember their first impressions of Jeff and Ericka. “They were in real trouble,” recalls Donnell. “We were not at all sure their marriage could survive. It was heart breaking.” But Jesus had a bigger plan!

“We know that God used the Marriage Getaway and Pastor Darrell and Donnell to save our marriage! We were being loved on by Joni and Friends. It’s where we were taught to trust God first and to love each other more than we loved ourselves,” explains Ericka.

“I had never really looked at our marriage in a biblical way before,” shares Jeff. “But the Marriage Getaway saved our marriage and renewed our faith in God. I saw a big change in our family when they saw the big change in us. When they saw us run hard after God in all things it changed our kids. It set an example for them that they had never seen before. It was a trickle-down effect, and it still continues to this day.”

This year, Jeff and Ericka celebrate their 7th Marriage Getaway together where they now serve on our Marriage Getaway leadership team. Their testimony of God’s mercy, grace, and power is shared at every Marriage Getaway, giving Christ-centered hope to other special needs couples in crisis. Thank you for praying for couples like Jeff and Ericka! Your love is holding special needs families together!

Couples experience absolute miracles at Marriage Getaways!
Mary and Glenn have 14 biological and adopted children; two have already gone home to be with the Lord. Six of their children have disabilities and the emotional challenges that come from abandonment and the abuse of their birth parents. “It’s a big ordeal to go anywhere,” shares Mary.

Mary explains that couples parenting children with disabilities share struggles like other marriages, but those struggles are multiplied exponentially by the unique challenges that disability brings. Their opportunity to put in the time and attention needed to strengthen their marriage is often limited by the demands of their children with special needs.

“We are so tired at the end of the day that there is no energy left to read, talk or pray together. However, at the Marriage Getaway we had time to spend together, just the two of us. Uninterrupted conversation with each other and God.”

At Marriage Getaway, Mary and Glenn were able to focus on each other and their marriage while developing the skills needed to keep their relationship strong and focused on Jesus. Since returning home, they have shared that they understand each other better and process conflict in new and Christ-honoring ways. Marriage Getaways provide practical biblical tools to couples impacted by disability, all the while connecting husbands and wives to a community of other couples parenting special needs children. And the support Joni and Friends offers through Marriage Getaways doesn’t end once the retreat is over. Our online marriage support groups keep couples connected to each other as well as to the body of Christ. We are dedicated to doing everything we can to hold families impacted by disability together, and we praise God that you are, too!

Glenn and Mary now pray together daily, thanking God for the gift of each other and asking for the Lord’s help so they can love each other like Jesus, even when they don’t feel like it. Their marriage – and their beautiful family – is stronger because of Marriage Getaway and our ongoing marriage support groups!
Growing the Body of Christ One Wheelchair at a Time

From Central Tennessee

Our Joni and Friends Tennessee team just got back from delivering wheelchairs and sharing the Gospel in Guatemala. 13-year-old Ella received a new, custom-fitted wheelchair during our Wheels for the World outreach, giving her and her mother new reasons to smile!

Ella is paralyzed from the waist down. She suffers from chronic pain and from constant bullying from the other children in her community. Before we visited her village, Ella felt she had no reason to smile.

Ella’s mother sells homemade pillowcases on the roadside. As a single mother without a support system, she was forced to bring Ella with her – carrying her on her back. The physical and emotional weight of their dire circumstances became almost too much to bear.

But the new wheelchair you sent Ella has given her and her mother new hope for a brighter future! Their smiles light up the room, and now that Ella can safely leave the house in her seat of dignity, she and her mother are excited to start going to church!

Ella and her mom weren’t the only ones who learned about the love of Jesus at this Wheels for the World outreach. Every wheelchair recipient – and their family – heard the Gospel, and 24 people accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior! Because of you, more and more people are being welcomed into God’s kingdom!

From Mississippi

Molly is a single mom who knows all too well the fear, exhaustion and isolation associated with having a child with disabilities. When she adopted her daughter Savannah from China, “She came home as a very malnourished two-and-a-half-year-old weighing under 20 pounds. Upon leaving China, Savannah’s diagnosis was cerebral palsy. However, we knew even while in China there was much more to her story. Once home she saw just about every specialist there was, and slowly we discovered what a complex little puzzle she truly was. She was diagnosed with a rare genetic condition called Dup15q, autism, global development delay, hypotonia, receptive and expressive language disorder, and sensory and feeding issues. I had a lot to learn!”

“The life we live is hard many days. It’s exhausting. Some days I don’t know what to do, or where to turn for help.” Gratefully, Molly turned to Joni and Friends for help, and she found a new community of support and encouragement at Family Retreat where Christ transformed her heart. Thank you for giving special needs families like Molly’s strength and hope in Jesus!

From Ohio

Trevor was born four months early with cerebral palsy, an enlarged heart, underdeveloped organs, a brain bleed, staph infection, and collapsed lungs. Now as a young adult, Trevor has become a wonderful advocate for Joni and Friends Ohio. Trevor says that Joni and Friends has helped him develop his leadership skills in disability ministry and has given him the tools and resources needed to succeed. Trevor showcases the vision of Joni and Friends: A world where every person with a disability finds hope, dignity, and their place in the body of Christ. He now uses his gifts to give back to the ministry he loves.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27
From Texas

We met 9-year-old Emmanuel and his dad, William, when they came to our Wheels for the World outreach in Cuba. Emmanuel has cerebral palsy, and without a proper wheelchair, he has been unable to leave his home. But all that changed when you sent our Joni and Friends Texas team to Emmanuel’s village, providing him with the wheelchair he needed, a Bible and the Joni book in Spanish.

As William watched his son beam with joy over his new wheelchair, tears filled his eyes. “I cannot believe it!” he exclaimed. “I will always remember this experience with you. Tell the people who sent this wheelchair that we are very thankful!” Now that Emmanuel has his own sturdy wheelchair, he can go to school, play in the park, and go to church!

Thank you for sending wheelchairs and the love of Christ to Emmanuel and to countless other children like him! Thank you for showing him the true meaning of his name: God is with us!

She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’

MATTHEW 1:23

From North Carolina

Vicky Lynn has eight children; three with disabilities. She attends Family Retreat and Family Retreat at Home with her two youngest daughters, Joanna and Danielle, who both have Down syndrome.

Vicky Lynn explains, “It’s easy to get bogged down in everyday life. At Family Retreat, I am reminded to view my life in the context of eternity.” For Vicky Lynn and her family, Joni and Friends has become a tremendous source of inspiration.

Joanna and Danielle have formed close relationships with families and volunteers that attend Family Retreat each year. They love all the Bible lessons, praise and worship, and fun activities. And ever since Family Retreat at Home, Joanna and Danielle have become part of Joni and Friends North Carolina’s online story time hour each week. The greatest highlight for Vicky, Joanna, and Danielle occurred the night Joni shared a story with the families during our weekly story time!

Through Joni and Friends, Joanna and Danielle have found real friends, and they’re abundantly happy knowing there are people in their lives who love them. Thank you for sending God’s love to special needs families all over the country and all over the world!

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

JOHN 13:35

There are lots of exciting events happening in your area, too!

In addition to Family Retreats and Wheels for the World outreaches, our Field teams are offering Respite Events, Support Groups, Church Trainings and all sorts of Family Fun gatherings.

Visit joniandfriends.org/events today and find out how you can get involved!
To give a gift in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special occasion, visit joniandfriends.org/donate
Happy Anniversary
KEN AND JONI!


Whether serving at one of our Retreats & Getaways, on a Wheels for the World outreach, or through one of our many other Christ-centered programs, Joni and Ken love telling others the Good News about Jesus!

39 years later, Ken and Joni continue to give us a beautiful example of the “marriage-love” described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Reading through the Bible together each day helps keep Joni and Ken’s marriage strong!

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8
Joni & Ken: An Untold Love Story
By Ken and Joni Eareckson Tada

"Ken and I are peeling back the curtain in this book to reveal some of the toughest years of our life together. Yes, it is definitely an untold story... but we hope the lessons we’ve learned will bolster others to stick with their vows, for better or for worse.”

- Softcover
- 192 pages

$12

100% of all sales go directly to support disability ministry!

TO ORDER: • Mail order form • Call toll-free: 800.736.4177
• Online: joniandfriends.org/store • Phone: Text ORDER to 818.707.5664