



## PERSEVERING THROUGH PANDEMIC

by Joni Eareckson Tada

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It was long, tedious and at times, fearful. I am referring to our struggle through COVID 19. We look back and wonder, *how did we get through it? Am I adjusting well to the new normal?* Good questions. Because from what I've read, we are far from 'through it.' The bizarre twists and turns of its mutations guarantee that coronavirus will be a part of our 'new normal' for years to come. So, the lessons we learned, the habits we gained, and the disciplines we cultivated will serve us well when another virus creeps back.

I noticed that during the recent pandemic, our everyday vocabulary suddenly included words such as 'sequester,' 'isolation,' and 'shelter in place.' Followers of Jesus had to learn to follow him in tighter spaces, from the kitchen to the living room to the bedroom and back. You'd think it were simple for the average believer. But boredom, spiritual lethargy, and frustrations with housemates revealed a disappointing fact: we are not the paragons of virtue we'd like to think we are.

For someone with a disability like me, a wheelchair user? The isolation and quarantine felt especially restrictive. COVID 19 classed me as a high-risk, vulnerable individual; little wonder I had to stay indoors for not only weeks, but for many months – my years of quadriplegia and my fragile lungs make me a prime candidate for the insidious virus.

But I'm not paragon of virtue, either. My disability did not automatically make me holier. No, decades of paralysis have taught me that suffering – especially when it confines – is God's primary way of revealing the stuff of which I am made. And often, it is not very pretty. Back in March, sheltering-in-place had me wheeling over my husband's toes in the small square footage of our home. Short fuses, bruised feelings, sharp words, and cold shoulders became almost commonplace that first month.

Ken Tada and I quickly realized that if we were going to survive the pandemic, we had to get a grip on God's purposes for us during isolation. We reminded each other of James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life to those who love him." Outwitting this strange virus meant persevering. Standing the test. And from it, we could expect a blessing.

And so, Ken and I started focusing on the positives. Reading more books, rather than watching Netflix. Memorizing scripture. Reaching out to neighbors. Most of all, every time an irritation caused one of us to flare up? We'd take a deep breath and remind each other to honor Jesus Christ with our responses. Simple words like "you're right and I'm wrong; would you forgive me?" became part of our everyday vocabulary.

While housebound, our theme was Hebrews 12:1, "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." We persevered in running the race, but every time a new government directive shifted the finish line, a fog of depression settled over us. The coronavirus was ramping up in California, and as a vulnerable individual, we had to take double precautions. We cut down on one or two caregivers which, in turn, put a greater burden on my husband to take care of me.

One afternoon, Ken confessed, "Joni, I don't think I can take this anymore. Helping with your toileting routines? Getting up to turn you at night? I feel so

tired.” Now, there were times in years past when I would have snapped back, “You think you are weary? How about me in this wheelchair?!” But my paralyzing injury has taught me key lessons. Like compassion. And so, when Ken shared how weary he was, my response? “Oh, hon, if I were you doing all this caregiving? I’d feel the same way. So, I’m going to do all I can to make things as easy as possible.”

God has amazing lessons in perseverance to teach us. And there’s no better time than now, as we move forward through COVID-19. You and I cannot afford to wallow in self-pity. There’s too much at stake. The reputation of Christ, for one thing. Will we dishonor him with our complaints? Or will we trust? I choose to trust my Savior.

And so, I now hear that there may be a bad flu this fall and winter. Others may be slowly going back to work – albeit with masks on – but I dare not feel sorry for myself as I remain housebound in my wheelchair. At night when I am in bed with pain? When my mind is so scattered, I cannot put two words together in prayer? I still choose to trust my Savior. So, I sing. I can softly murmur the words of so many hymns and worship songs that I’ve memorized over the years. And as I do, God helps me persevere.

Friend, even as we journey toward the other end of this coronavirus, you and I have every reason to be cheerful in Christ. Remember, he is sovereign, and he knows exactly where this virus will go, and how long it will last. So, join me in taking up the cross our Father has assigned us; join me in walking the blood-stained path to Calvary and... *persevere*. Turn off the TV and read. Memorize scripture. Reach out to neighbors. Make Christ real to your loved ones. Show compassion. Say you are sorry. And most of all, sing of your Savior. It’s the beautiful melody that will carry us through any and every pandemic.

Joni Eareckson Tada serves as CEO of Joni and Friends, a global Christian ministry that serves people with disabilities and their families. Visit [Joni and Friends](#) to discover ways you can serve among special-needs families around the world. Or, visit our [online store](#) to pick up any one of Joni's inspiring books, especially her autobiography [Joni](#) or her classic on the subject of healing, [Beside Bethesda](#). All proceeds from the sales of our books go directly to support the disability ministry outreach of Joni and Friends. Visit us today!