



CHRONIC ILLNESS & DISABILITY

God's Peace in the Midst of Pain



June Hunt



HOPE
for the Heart.

CHRONIC ILLNESS & DISABILITY

God's Peace
in the Midst of Pain

JUNE HUNT



ROSE PUBLISHING/ASPIRE PRESS

Torrance, California



ROSE PUBLISHING/ASPIRE PRESS

Chronic Illness & Disability: God's Peace in the Midst of Pain

Copyright © 2015 Hope For The Heart

All rights reserved.

Aspire Press, a division of Rose Publishing, Inc.

4733 Torrance Blvd., #259

Torrance, California 90503 USA

www.aspirepress.com

Register your book at www.aspirepress.com/register

Get inspiration via email, sign up at www.aspirepress.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, posted on the Internet, or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV™” are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “ESV™” are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version™. Copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The information and solutions offered in this resource are a result of years of Bible study, research, and practical life application. They are intended as guidelines for healthy living and are not a replacement for professional medical advice and counseling. JUNE HUNT and HOPE FOR THE HEART make no warranties, representations, or guarantees regarding any particular result or outcome. Any and all express or implied warranties are disclaimed. Please consult qualified medical, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual conditions and needs. JUNE HUNT and HOPE FOR THE HEART do not advocate that you treat yourself or someone you know and disclaim any and all liability arising directly or indirectly from the information in this resource.

For more information on Hope For The Heart, visit www.hopefortheheart.org or call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673).

Printed in the United States of America
010115RRD

CONTENTS

Definitions	10
What Is a Chronic Illness?	11
What Is an Impairment?.....	13
What Are Some Common Illnesses and Impairments?	15
What Common Questions Trouble Those with Afflictions?.....	21
Can Any Blessings Come from Afflictions?	24
Characteristics of Those with Afflictions	28
What Feelings Are Common for Those with Chronic Illness or Impairment?	30
What Are the Five Stages of Sorrow?.....	36
What Losses Come with Chronic Illness and Impairment?.....	41
Causes of Resentment and Bitterness	45
What Terms Can Hurt and What Can Help?.....	46
Why Responses Reinforce Resentment?.....	51
Why Is the Root Cause of Resentment?.....	55
What Is God's Solution to Bitterness and Resentment?	60

Steps to Solution	65
How to Have a Transformed Life	69
How to Handle First Signs and First Steps ...	75
How to Track Your Treatment	80
How to Accept God's Truths.....	84
Do's and Don'ts for Family and Friends.....	88



Dear Friend,

Chronic illness is such a tender topic for me. During her latter years, my sweet mother was challenged with congestive heart failure, pancreatitis, liver cancer, and multiple surgeries. As her health declined, I increasingly became involved in her care.

Eventually, my brother and I began taking turns looking after Mom. Though we had no formal arrangement, in the evenings Ray would drop by her home after work. As he was heading out, I arrived and stayed until 10:30—leaving just in time for *HOPE IN THE NIGHT*, my live two-hour call-in counseling program starting at 11 p.m.

Those years of caring for my mother were especially precious to me. Though she went home to be with the Lord in 1999, certain memories of our “together time” are as fresh as if they happened yesterday. I can still picture riding to the emergency room one spring day, holding Mom’s hand with the paramedics beside her as the ambulance sped through the streets. And I remember times of fatigue as long days turned into long nights and arranging and rearranging my schedule so I could be with my mom, whom I loved more than life.

How well I recall the time when she couldn’t speak and hadn’t slept for three days. I arrived at her home about midnight and found her

unusually fidgety—even trying to pull an IV out of her arm. The overnight nurse said, “Why not just get in bed with her?”

“Sure ... of course.” (Why didn’t I think of that?)

So, fully clothed, I slipped off my shoes and climbed into her bed, yet she still seemed restless. But when I began singing *It Is Well with My Soul*, she became perfectly still. Putting my right arm around her, she snuggled close and completely relaxed in the shadow of *The Old Rugged Cross*.

Having learned to totally depend on the Lord during times of difficulty, what joy it brought to my heart when she began to silently mouth the words, “I need Thee, oh I need Thee. Every hour I need Thee.” While holding her through *Amazing Grace*, I’ll never forget Mom, with her doe-like eyes, fixing her gaze on me. I continued softly singing and cradling her in my arms until 5:00 a.m. Then, Mom finally fell asleep! Yet I didn’t move for another hour for fear the slightest jostling might awaken her. Honestly, this time with my mother through those long night hours was a blessing tenderly sharing those moments with her is time I’ll cherish forever.

Over the years people have said, “I know caring for your mother must have been quite a burden!” The truth is that it was *both* a burden *and* a blessing.

Let me be candid: Living with chronic illness is hard. And, for some, it will be harder than for others. But the Bible says, “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2 ESV).

Those suffering from a chronic illness—as well as their caregivers—have a very real burden. And bearing that burden should be shared with positive encouragers who offer practical support. Otherwise, the burden can feel *unbearable*.

Ironically, it’s the burden itself that brings us to our knees. Amazingly, that’s where the burden is lifted, when surrendered to the Lord—until the next hour or day or week when the pressure pushes us again to rely fully on Christ. That’s when we experience “*our Savior, who daily bears our burdens*” (Psalm 68:19).

During this “cycle of surrender,” we discover God’s unsurpassed strength to bear our burden and His unfailing hope, the blessing hidden *beneath the burden!* The truth is that we would have no blessing to discover if we had no burden to bear.

Today, this is how I think of the years spent ministering to Mom:

Was it challenging? *Yes!*

Did God help me shoulder the burden? *Always!*

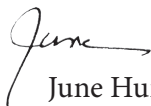
Did I gain compassion through caring for her?
Absolutely!

Would I trade the compassion for being
“challenge free”? *Never!*

Remember: In sickness—and in health—God is ever-present. Notice how Psalm 119:49–50 reveals the truth about our God, His Word, and our suffering: “*You have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.*”

May the insights within these pages give answers to your questions, solutions for your struggles, and hope for your heart. Ultimately your *faith* in God’s faithfulness, your *hope* in His promises, and Christ’s *love* in your heart are the most important gifts you can share with a chronically ill loved one. May all these be yours in abundance!

Yours in the Lord’s hope,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right from the end of the name.

June Hunt

CHRONIC ILLNESS & DISABILITY

God's Peace in the Midst of Pain

She is 17 years old and set to take on the world. She has everything in her favor: She's outgoing and athletic with a boyfriend by her side. She's a tennis player and a swimmer. Her physical agility and prowess tag this teen as a true athlete. But that will all change one hot July afternoon when she swims about in cool waters ... *for the last time.*

A self-described risk-taker, Joni positions herself for a refreshing dive. She *jumps* ... and in an instant her body is rocked from head to toe. She had anticipated slicing and gliding through the water like so many times before, but now it's like she's collided with a brick wall at the bottom of the bay. Joni finds herself flooded with fear and confusion, now realizing the waters surrounding her were dangerously shallow for her routine dive. Her mind races: How could she have miscalculated? Why is she motionless ... *and still underwater?* As Lamentations 3:54 says, "*the waters closed over my head, and I thought I was about to perish.*"



DEFINITIONS

Suddenly she hears a voice, “Joni, are you looking for shells?”¹

What relief—someone has come to her rescue! It’s her sister, Kathy. Joni desperately wants to answer—no, she isn’t looking for shells—but she can’t lift her head out of the water! Instead, she knows she’s breathing her final breaths—the blue waters around her beginning to fade to black.

Sensing something is terribly wrong, Kathy wraps her arms around Joni’s shoulders and pulls, then vigorously tugs while a scream of desperation reverberates across Joni’s mind—“Oh please, dear God. Don’t let me die!”²

Joni’s cry echoes that of the psalmist ...

**“Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
LORD, hear my voice. Let your ears be
attentive to my cry for mercy.”**

(Psalm 130:1–2)

WHAT IS a Chronic Illness?

Kathy finally shoves Joni above the surface of the water, and her once submerged sister gulps in air like never before.

Death has been avoided, but Joni still faces dire circumstances. Kathy asks, “Are you okay?” Joni realizes—in growing horror—that her limbs are dangling motionlessly. She remembers her head hitting hard on the bottom of the bay, but she was totally unaware that her neck had snapped. While lying on an inland raft transporting her back to the beach, Joni shouts: “Kathy—I can’t move!”³

Desperate for some sign that this is all a bad dream, that everything will ultimately be okay, Joni cries out to her sister, “Hold me!”⁴

And then Kathy, already firmly holding Joni’s hands, lifts them and softly replies, “I am, Joni.”⁵

In the days ahead, Joni will feel overcome—as described in these words from the Psalms ...

**“I was overcome by distress and sorrow.”
(Psalm 116:3)**

- ▶ Chronic illnesses are persistent, unhealthy conditions of the body that linger over a long period of time.

The word “chronic” comes from the Greek word *chronos*, which means “time.”⁶

- ▶ Chronic illnesses are often linked to physical weakness, frequent discomfort, and persistent pain.

Too frequently, this cup of suffering holds not just physical *stress*, but also emotional *distress* because of a decrease in caring relationships, social opportunities, and spiritual understanding.

**“My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.”
(Psalm 31:10)**