

# ***Upward Bound Ministries Newsletter***

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## **Charlie's Chats**

Greetings, Upward Bounders! What an encouragement it has been for me to hear from so many of you who tell me how much my recent newsletters have blessed you and ministered to you! That's exactly what I prayed for – to find meaning and purpose even in the midst of this struggle I am having. I have even received emails and notes from people I don't even know. People who have ended up with my newsletters because some of you have passed them along! It confirms what a dear friend told me, that I cannot define myself as a minister who just ministers on stage – that I am a minister, period. I am living proof that God can use anybody He wants for His purposes, no matter what condition they are in! So be encouraged today that God can use you just as you are to bless somebody! Don't let any physical or emotional struggle stop you from being a spiritual blessing to the audience God has given you. Trust me, they need you!

## **The Latest on My Condition**

Since my last newsletter, things have moved very slowly. I didn't get in to see my Neurologist until just yesterday, and I can't get in to see the *Tourettes* Specialist in Gainseville until July 14<sup>th</sup>. In the mean time I am getting no extra treatment and the symptoms persist. But the good news is that Tammy and I have noticed some positive signs of improvement in some areas. I'm more fluent at home than I was before and I have less bad spasms than I did before, as long as I am in a familiar environment like home or somewhere very familiar. I haven't had a "severe" neurological episode since I last wrote you, which is a huge relief!

Where I still really struggle is with impromptu conversation, (Whether in person or on the phone), unfamiliar settings, and any situation where I am stressed or tired. Any kind of stress. A recent example of how it turns on and off is when I went to see my neurologist. I had no fluency of speech whatsoever the entire visit. I stuttered, stammered, repeated words and phrases, and made those awful *Tourettes*-like sounds nonstop the whole time. But then I went straight to my chiropractor, whom I am familiar with, and had little symptoms. By the time I got home, I was calm. Go figure!

I still have not heard anything from the panel of experts who are suppose to be meeting over my case, but I have found out that the specialist I am going to see in July is actually on that panel. So maybe then we can start identifying things more clearly and getting proper treatment. It's all the waiting that is the worst part. These days it takes forever to get in to see anybody! No wonder the Bible mentions the word "wait" so many times! ☺

## **Making Some Positive Progress**

Thanks to the many prayers of my friends and fans, I know God has been actively at work helping me cope and make improvements. Even though I still have a long way to go, we can see progress. One tangible thing that is really helping me keep the bad episodes at bay is my speech therapist. She has

gotten me to the point to where I can read out loud with pretty good fluency and retain what I just read. She is giving me practical tools I can use when anything starts to flare up. Some of it has to do with breathing patterns and being aware of when I tense up. She has also gotten me to where I can maintain fairly good fluency during short, structural conversations (familiar people, private settings, familiar topic). I have to really concentrate and focus on talking slower, talking in phrases, my breathing patterns, etc. But it is beginning to make a difference. It's like having to concentrate on blinking or breathing – we don't focus on those things – they just come naturally. Same goes with talking. But in my case I have to re-train myself to talk. So until I can do it without concentrating, I have to be conscious of every word, talk slower and speak in phrases, while continuing to breathe without stopping. You wouldn't believe how tiring and challenging that is!

The other tangible thing that is helping me is keeping my frame of mind positive. I do that by focusing on who I can bless each day rather than thinking about my own situation. The more that my mind is on others and less on me, the more positive I become. So whether it's through my newsletters, my web site updates, my emails, or through the contacts that I have with people each day, I ask God to help me find a way to bless or encourage someone. Try it – it works! ☺

It is also helping me a great deal to read Christian books that relate to my situation and challenge me to overcome through my attitude and faith. Even when I can't concentrate long, I at least highlight the words that speak to me and come back to them later. Such books have led me to applicable scripture and have given me great hope and encouragement to not only get through this, but to rise above it and allow God to use me to bless others through it!

I am also at a point now to where I try to exercise regularly. I walk every day with Tammy, I work out on my weight machine, and I swim. I have to take it a little at a time, as I am nowhere near full strength, but at least I am able to do it in small bites. I still tire very easily as my stamina is really low, but I am confident that with continued and persistent exercise, over time I will get there!

## Learning Can Be Painful!

If you think this experience has made me some superhero holy man, think again! Haha! I'm just like you – I've had have my struggles, my ups and downs just as anybody would. I try to stay positive, but honestly there are little spurts where my attitude just pretty much stinks! Sometimes my attitude and outlook appear radiant and contagious, but I have to admit that sometimes I can just be plain hard to live with! Just ask Tammy! (*On second thought, don't ask her! Haha!*) All that to say we're all human, and our emotions fluctuate.

I really do wish I could be a lot more consistent. Don't you? I know some of you must read these letters and say, "Wow, that guy stays so positive all the time!" Ya, I try to. But sometimes life gets the best of me, too. You are not around to see all my everyday struggles I have with attitude, faith, and godliness through confusing times. That's why I have chosen to be vulnerable, open and honest with you. Because I contend that we all may be the same way to some extent. And I contend that many of us feel guilty that we don't always handle things better than we do. But you know, that's OK. God understands us. He made us. He knows how we think and what triggers our highs and lows. He knows us better than we do, yet still loves us and accepts us for who we are.

I have come to realize that God's love, care, provision and interest in my every day affairs doesn't change. My feelings may change from day to day, but He doesn't. I believe He understands when we struggle, and doesn't judge us. He hurts with us and is there to walk us through it. And when our feelings or emotions fluctuate, He remains consistent. He never leaves us or forsakes us.

God never gives up on us no matter how inconsistent we can be. We just need to learn in hard times to keep our perspective in tune with God's. It's not easy, but I'm learning that.

Below are a few lessons pertaining to perspective and attitude which have helped develop my frame of mind since the accident - particularly the past 3 months which have been more challenging in many ways. I'm still a progress in work, so I haven't mastered these. But I hope something I am learning below will help you as well.

## Learning The Right Perspective and Attitude

1. A man who was a disabled genius whom I read about in a book said "If you are disabled, you should pour your energies into those areas in which you are not handicapped. ***You should concentrate on what you can do well, and not mourn over what you cannot do.***" For me, I am learning that although I can't perform and minister the way I am used to doing right now, there are plenty of other ways I can minister. Writing to you being one of them!
2. Our attitude should be "God, I am trusting You. I know You are in control of my life." I don't have to try to figure everything out. I am learning that I may not understand everything that is happening, but I believe God has my best interest at heart. And if I had eyes to see behind the scenes, I would see that God is fighting my battles and arranging things on my behalf.
3. Whatever it is, God will not allow anything to come in to our lives unless He has a purpose for it. We may not like it; we may be uncomfortable. But I am learning if I strive to keep the right attitude, in the end, I will come out stronger and better than I was before.
4. Faith doesn't always instantly deliver us, but it will always carry us through. I am learning not use my faith to try to get rid of all my problems, but instead to use my faith to remain calm in the midst of my problems.
5. Too often we tend to be shortsighted. I am learning that when my prayers are not being answered the way I want, or when things aren't happening as fast as I would like, or if I am not seeing circumstances change in my favor; that either means God is protecting me from danger up ahead, it's not the right time, or God has something better in store. He knows what is best for you and me. He's on our side! So no need to live our lives upset and frustrated.
6. Not everything God allows in our lives may be about us. Sometimes God may ask us to go through some challenging experiences in order to help somebody else. He might put me or you in an uncomfortable place so we can be the answer to somebody else's prayer.
7. We can be in the storm, but don't let the storm get in us, robbing us of our joy, energy and enthusiasm. I am learning not to lose peace over things I can't change.

## A Lesson from the Eagle

I was reading the other day and came across a great analogy. Believers who trust in God can be compared to the eagle. The eagle has pests, obstacles, and things to overcome. One of the eagle's greatest pests is the crow. Yes, believe it or not, the crow! He's always squawking, always causing the eagle trouble. Often the crow will come right behind the eagle and start to pester him, aggravating and annoying him. How does the eagle get rid of this pest? Does he turn around and fight it? No, he spreads his large, 8 foot wingspan, catches the wind currents, and rises higher and

higher. Eventually he gets to an altitude where no other bird, including the crow, can live. I learned that on rare occasions, the eagle has been seen flying in altitudes up to 20,000 feet. That's nearly as high as a jet flies! To me, the crow represents the things in life that pester us every day. The things the devil may use to try to rob us of our joy. It may be a person, a pain, a circumstance. To get rid of that pest, we must rise higher! Crows can't compete with eagles. We are eagles, made in the image of God. We have the ability to rise higher. Learn to live above our circumstances!

The eagle seems to know how to handle a storm that is coming as well. This could represent the major hurdles we face in life. He doesn't get upset because he knows the way out. Instead of fighting his way through the storm, struggling and straining, and risking coming out of the storm weary, worn, and beat up, he rises above the storm. God has given him the ability to rise above it, just like He has given us the ability to rise above our storms in life. We may not be able to change some situations that come in to our lives, but we can rise above them! Learn a lesson from the eagle!

As you know, I fly a lot. Sometimes at the time of takeoff the skies are dreary and gray. For those of you who have flown and know about those days I am talking about, have you noticed that when the plane rises higher and gets above the clouds, that the sky is a magnificent blue? You see, the sun was shining the entire time. We just needed a higher perspective to see it.

The clouds in our lives are only temporary. Remember the old saying, "This, too shall pass"? It will! Things may look dark and gloomy right now, but the sun is up there shining. The clouds will go away at some point, and we will once again experience some kind of normalcy. We just need that higher perspective to get us through! We were made to soar like the eagle, not to flap around like the crow!

*James 1:2-4*

*Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

## **Email Newsletter List**

Many of you used to get my newsletter by email, but after I lost my computer in the accident, we were unable to retrieve that email folder I had. So I need to reconstruct that list. If you desire to get my newsletters by email, please let me know either by emailing me or dropping me a note. You can use the contact information in the header of this letter.

## **Use My Newsletters!**

Please feel free to pass any of my newsletters along to anyone who you think they might minister to. If God can use anything coming from my heart to encourage and minister to anybody, that would give me great joy and fulfillment. That's what life is all about! We're all here for a purpose, no matter what our condition is or what our circumstances are. We are made to soar!

***Thot for the Day***

*We can't change the winds, but we can always adjust our sails.*

**Cya here, there, or in the air!  
We're Upward Bound!  
Uncle Charlie**