

Sharon's Story

Sharon wrote her own story.

On Eagle's Wings

I was adopted at birth into a loving home and later diagnosed with osteopetrosis, also known as marble bone disease. My adopted mother was told I would never have a 'normal' life, go to school or play with other kids as there was a high risk of me breaking bones. You may be reading thinking "everyone breaks bones in their life, its no big deal" but for me there are so many complications because my bones do not heal by themselves and are extremely difficult to operate on. When I need to have surgery to fix my bones there is a high risk of infection and because of the thickening of my bone cavity. I also have little bone marrow capacity which leads to chronic anaemia.

My parents made up their minds very early on that no matter what obstacles were put in my way they were not going to wrap me in cotton wool. Instead, they decided to make sure I had as normal a life as possible. I went to school and played with other kids. As part of this so called 'normal' life I had many broken bones. My parents taught me that no matter how much pain I was in or how many bones I broke I was never to give up, and I should always keep pushing myself to get up and keep on moving forward with my life.

I married at 21 years of age and always knew there was very little chance I would have children. However, in 1986 I had my first child, a daughter. That was a constant struggle as I was breaking bones and trying to bring up a young child. Sadly my marriage broke down shortly before my daughter's fourth birthday and I was left to raise her alone.

In 1993 I met my second husband and we married in 1994. Before too long my husband started talking about having another child but I was hesitant to go through it all again. As with all the struggles in my life, I looked to my strong belief and faith in God (I was baptised a Christian as a teenager) for answers. For me it was a huge question that I had to put to God. I was led to a verse in the bible that told me God was not only going to equip me for having another child but he was going to do abundantly more than I could ever hope or imagine. Some months after that I found out I was pregnant with twins and in July of 1995 I gave birth to a boy and a girl. This would prove to be the greatest challenge of my life.

Over the years I have used a wheelchair from time to time. Up to this point I was still able to walk on crutches but the physical battles I faced daily caring for two babies took a toll on my body. In 1997 I broke my right arm then in 1998 my right hip. They were not able to give me a hip replacement as my bones were too hard to drill into. They completely removed my hip joint which meant I would no longer be able to stand or walk and would need to rely on a wheelchair for the rest of my life. At that point I thought my life was over.

During the following months of rehabilitation God showed me he had blessed me with two beautiful children to care for and raise, and reminded me to dust myself off and continue my journey.

My daughter is turning 28 this year and my twins are almost 19. It is hard to believe how fast the years have gone by and it is amazing when I think I actually made it through without going too crazy – though some of my friends may disagree about me going "too crazy".

In 2007 I was offered a position at my local Council as a Disability Enquiry Officer. In this role I provided information to people living with disability and seniors about accessibility issues, council facilities, community services and programs. In that time I gained great skills and knowledge from the people I worked with and was given many opportunities to expand my horizons.

From February 2012 to February 2013 I participated in the Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) Program which is a national program for people living with disability to help them identify and strengthen their leadership skills and develop a leadership plan for their life.

I have always loved to travel and prior to entering the LFT program I began planning my life-long dream holiday to Canada. This process enabled me to realise that although one of my greatest passions in life was travelling, as a person with a disability it would definitely be a huge physical challenge. From that dream holiday came the idea that I wanted to help others who love to travel but faced similar challenges and barriers because of living with disability. I decided to study a Certificate III in Tourism and upon completion in 2013 I established my own travel business called ACCESS-ABLE TRAVEL which plans customised holidays for people living with disability, their families and carers. I am hoping to grow this business into a valuable service that helps people realise their own travel dreams can be a reality.

I will always have this bone disease and I still have my bad days and good ones, but I won't allow it to define who I am as a person. I have a wonderful husband who cares for me and supports me in whatever I want to do. My children are out of home living their own lives and as I approach my 54th birthday I am entering a new season in my life - a season of change, a season of hope, a season of renewal and a season of success.

Isaiah 40:31 says "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall rise up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint".

Through this teaching and my faith I have learned that I was created for a purpose and I have a life journey to take. It is as I take that journey that I will fulfil my purpose and plan for an abundant future. I have learned that no matter what struggles and challenges come my way in the future as long as I continue to wait on God he will lift me up and renew my strength. It is then up to me to decide whether to give up or get up, dust myself off, and continue the journey.

My journey continues ...

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