

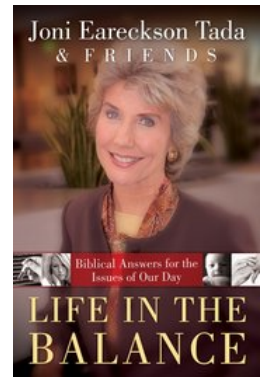
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# WHEN LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE:

Joni Eareckson Tada, Quadriplegic Disability Advocate,  
Confronts Life Issues Including Euthanasia, Autism, Eugenics and Genocide in New Book.

**Los Angeles, CA:** Today's culture continues to be divided on issues that create social and ethical dilemmas, including stem cell research, euthanasia, autism, eugenics, genocide and abortion. While indecision and confusion often accompany these controversies, the Christian community is challenged to stand upon biblical answers in a new book by Joni Eareckson Tada and Friends. In addition, Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability has made it their mission to impact society with a biblical worldview on issues pertaining to life, dignity, justice and equality.



In 1967, Joni Eareckson Tada became a quadriplegic as the result of a diving accident. She was placed in the geriatric ward of a state institution for nearly two years. Through her depression and despair, she held on to her faith, realizing there had to be a purpose in her suffering. Forty years later, Joni is one of the world's most recognized advocates for people with special needs and disabilities. For over twenty-five years, this gifted author, speaker and artist, has inspired others dealing with pain, loss and depression.

***Life in the Balance: Biblical Answers for the Issues of Our Day*** by Joni Eareckson Tada and Friends confronts some of the toughest issues and spiritual ponderings facing society. "We can't cave into fear about today's tough issues when we have the answers in the Bible," Tada says. "We need to study these ethical issues and discover answers that come with a responsibility to tell others." With contributions from medical experts and those who have endured some of life's most challenging circumstances *Life in the Balance* addresses sensitive issues with chapters that include:

***When Life Isn't Fair*** - While on a job interview, Vicky Olivas, a single mother, was attacked and shot leaving her paralyzed. Her attacker, who had previous criminal convictions, was released from prison after only three years, while Vicky faced life in a wheelchair. Over time, Vicky turned to God and found the power of forgiveness, leaning on the biblical promise that earthly injustices become light in contrast to God's glory and justice (2 Cor. 4:17).

***Making Sense of Autism*** (Pat Verbal) - For Christians, autism is one of those great mysteries of faith that often fills us with confusion and apprehension. Verbal shares the struggles and the rewards of families who live with this complicated diagnosis. Outreach ideas are included for the church seeking to reach those living with autism. Verbal says, "We sometimes fail to see children with special needs through God's eyes, when we need to act with the mind of Christ. We have a tremendous opportunity to grow alongside families impacted by autism and help them participate in fellowship."

***Searching for the Greater Good: The Stem Cell Debate*** - The conflict in this chapter is over embryonic stem cell research verses adult stem cell research. Stem cells are the body's own natural "master" cells, possessing the ability to become any kind of tissue. They can be found both in adults and in embryos, but in order for them to be extracted from an embryo, it must be killed. "Our human dignity is terribly exposed in a society that thinks nothing of destroying human life for the sole purpose of medical exploitation and research experimentation. Our society breeds a utilitarian ethic of promoting the greatest good, but is willing to sacrifice the weak and the vulnerable," says Eareckson Tada.

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***The Truth Behind the Pain of Abortion*** (Shelia Harper) - This section sorts through the facts of abortion and features both sides of the emotional argument, including a woman's right to choose abortion for medical reasons (severe birth defects), pregnancy from cases of rape or incest. It offers sound, biblical conclusions about the true meaning of sanctity of life. Harper also offers encouragement for both men and women, like herself, who have regretted choosing an abortion and are seeking forgiveness and hope.

***A Calloused Conscience: Eugenics and Genocide*** - The ethics of eugenics, cloning, and medically altering human beings are featured in this chapter, along with infanticide found in other countries. It also examines ways our society places a higher value of life on those considered healthy, attractive and gifted over those with genetic abnormality or disabilities. "Our task is to treat every human being as someone worthy of the dignity God has granted each of us. I've seen how God has used my weakness in relationships. My disability has provided not only for my spiritual growth, but the spiritual growth of my family and friends," says Tada.

***From Obscurity to Celebrity by Way of Tragedy: End of Life Issues*** (Kathy McReynolds) - Terri Schiavo, Karen Ann Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan were all landmark cases of people whose lives and rights were methodically terminated. They raised enormous questions about the sanctity of one's life and who should have authority over life and death. With increasing diagnoses of Alzheimer's and dementia, as well as medical advances for end-of-life care, Christians are reminded of the biblical principle that God's image is imprinted on every human being's soul.

***I've Got Questions about the American Dream*** (Steve Bundy) - Materialism seems to have overtaken today's society, as more people are convinced that the only way to be happy is to have everything. While many people's thirst for God is being misdirected toward belongings, this chapter shows how Christians must focus on God instead of material goods. "The problem is not with possessions themselves but with where you place your love and reliance. Whatever you focus your heart and attention on is what (or who) you worship," says Bundy.

Some of the issues discussed in *Life in the Balance* are also found in the ***Manhattan Declaration: A Call to Christian Conscience***, which challenges Christians to commit themselves to seek justice and offer compassion to the poor, oppressed and suffering. For more information visit [www.manhattandeclaration.org](http://www.manhattandeclaration.org).

"God wants this world be a place where His justice and mercy reign, where His righteousness exalts nations (Prov. 14:34), where the life and dignity of every human being is safeguarded (Ps. 82:3-4) and where people live in peace (Heb. 12:14)," says Tada. "Christians are called to make His kingdom real and to proclaim the gospel message as well as portray it." Joni's official website is **[www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)**.

*Life in the Balance* includes practical steps to becoming an advocate for compassionate causes discussed in this book as well as human trafficking, poverty, elder or child abuse or homelessness. The *Life in the Balance Leader's Guide* includes DVDs from the Joni and Friends TV episodes and is available for individual or group study and reflection.

***Life in the Balance***: Hardcover: 240 pages. Publisher: Regal (August 2010). ISBN-10: 0830755209. ISBN-13: 978-0830755202. ***Life in the Balance Leader's Guide***: Manual with DVD. 192 pages. Publisher: Regal. ISBN-10:0830755187. ISBN-13:9780830755189 Regular Price: \$29.99.

## Suggested *Life in the Balance* Interview Questions for Joni Eareckson Tada, Steve Bundy and Kathy McReynolds

1. What prompted you to write *Life in the Balance*?
2. How did you choose which controversial topics to discuss? Why are these issues important for Christians?
  1. For Joni only - How has your life as a quadriplegic affected your relationship with God?
  2. What are your thoughts for Christians who don't feel equipped to discuss these issues or feel they shouldn't debate emotionally charged issues?
  3. Who are some of the contributors to this book and how did they decide to pursue God's will through their personal experience?
  4. For Joni only - What were some issues you became passionate about from your life as a quadriplegic?
  5. How would you recommend Christians take a stand on the issues covered in the book?
  6. What do you think is most important in communicating God's love in situations such as violence or abortion?
  7. Why is it important to fully understand life issues like stem cell research, eugenics and genocide?
  8. What is your message to those who would consider abortion in specific and sensitive cases?
  9. Do you believe there is ever a circumstance to end someone's life, who maybe on life support? Was there a time you felt so discouraged you didn't want to live? How did you overcome those feelings of hopelessness?
  10. For Joni only - Why do you believe there is a positive side to living as a quadriplegic?
  11. Why is there a growing trend of eugenics and genocide among certain groups of people?
  12. What do you think has contributed to the growing focus on materialism in America?

### **Joni's Biography**

Joni Eareckson Tada, the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Joni and Friends, is an international advocate for people with disabilities. A diving accident in 1967 left Joni, then 17, a quadriplegic in a wheelchair, unable to use her hands. Joni learned to paint with a brush between her teeth, and her art paintings and prints have become sought-after and collected.

Joni has served as an advisor on numerous committees, including the National Council on Disability and the Disability Advisory Committee to the U.S. State Department. Joni has received numerous awards, honors and honorary degrees. She's written 46 books and numerous magazine articles. Her best-selling autobiography, *Joni*, has been translated into many languages. She hosts *Joni and Friends*, a daily radio program, and the television version of *Joni and Friends* looks at people who inspire Joni by enduring the most difficult trials while continuing to trust in God. She has been featured in a variety of national publications, as well as television and radio programs. Joni and her husband, Ken Tada, have been married since 1982 and live in Calabasas, California.

Joni and Friends is committed to recruiting, training, and motivating Christians to reach out to people with disabilities, helping them to become leaders in their churches and communities. Today, the Joni and Friends International Disability Center serves as the administrative hub for an array of programs which provide outreach to thousands of families affected by disability around the globe.

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## **Contributors**

### **Steve Bundy**

Steve Bundy is the Managing Director of the Christian Institute on Disability as well as International Outreach at Joni and Friends. This initiative paves the way for increased education, training and equipping of disability ministers while focusing on public policy issues that affect the disabled in our culture and world today. Steve frequently appears on *Joni and Friends* television episodes and has written articles or been interviewed for *Christianity Today*, *Charisma* magazine, *Focus on the Family*, and others.

Steve and his wife, Melissa, know firsthand the joys and challenges of parenting a child with special needs, as their own son, Caleb, was born with chromosome deletion, which resulted in global delay and a secondary diagnosis of autism. Steve holds a B.A. in Theology and Missions and an M.A. in Organizational Leadership. He is an ordained minister and has served as a youth pastor and missionary. Steve and Melissa have two sons and live in Simi Valley, California.

### **Sheila Harper**

Sheila Harper is the Founder and President of SaveOne, an international outreach ministry for men and women suffering in silence after an abortion. After enduring seven years of anguish over choosing abortion, Sheila found forgiveness and restoration through Jesus Christ. She is the author of four books, including her personal story, *The Survivor*, and *SaveOne: A Guide to Emotional Healing After Abortion*, which has been translated into six languages. She speaks worldwide on the topic of abortion, while training recovery group facilitators.

SaveOne currently has 150 chapters in the U.S. and 20 international chapters in nine countries. She holds a B.A. in life-issues counseling and lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, Jack Harper, Pastor of CrossRoads Church in Antioch, Tennessee, and their two sons. You can order Sheila's books or find a SaveOne chapter near you at [www.saveone.org](http://www.saveone.org).

### **Dr. Kathy McReynolds**

Kathy McReynolds is the Director of Public Policy for the Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability. She develops position papers on bioethics that seek to benefit people with disabilities, as well as contributes to curriculum development for courses in disability studies.

Kathy holds a B.A. in Christian Education from Biola University, an M.A. in Systematic Theology from the Talbot School of Theology, and earned her Ph.D in Ethics at USC. She specializes in ethical issues in genetic enhancement research and has written five books. Since 2000, Kathy has taught in the Biblical Studies Department and the English and Apologetics Departments at Biola University. Kathy has served on several ethics committees for hospitals and universities, and has numerous prestigious awards, including the Leading Health Care Professional of the World by the International Biographical Center in 2009. Kathy resides in Oak Park, California, with her husband, Mike, and their three children.

### **Pat Verbal**

Pat Verbal is the Manager of Curriculum Development at Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability. She is a featured speaker in churches, conferences and in the media, sharing from her 25 years of experience as a Christian education pastor, school administrator and consultant. Pat has written and/or co-authored 12 books and numerous articles on Christian education, including *Special Needs Special Ministry* and *Special Needs Smart Pages* by Joni and Friends.

In her work on the National Day of Prayer Task Force, Pat co-authored the best-selling *My Family's Prayer Calendar* with Shirley Dobson. She has been a guest on *Pastor to Pastor* from Focus on the Family, Trinity Broadcast Network, and a teacher for the Billy Graham School of Evangelism. She is a graduate of Azusa Pacific University and holds an M.A. in Pastoral Studies from the C. P. Haggard School of Theology, where she served on the Council of Church Leaders. Pat and her husband, Stan, have two grown sons and live in Dallas, Texas.