

Living Beyond Limitations

By Olivia King

Mary Yerkes has a story to tell. Despite living with an often-debilitating chronic illness, Mary Yerkes is a well-published writer, who contributes to many Christian publications such as *Focus on the Family* and *Discipleship Journal*. Through her writing, she encourages others with chronic illnesses to seek-out and trust in God's plans for their lives, and gives practical advice on living life abundantly.

According to Mary, her chronic illness has greatly affected her family and their daily lives. Fortunately, even though statistics show that approximately 75% of marriages faced with a chronic illness diagnostic end in divorce, Mary and her husband have found ways to weather the storms of life which would otherwise make them drift apart. They do this by loving "beyond the natural". Some days, due to her rheumatoid arthritis, Mary can't walk well or even carry a laundry basket and so has to rely on her husband and friends to help her out. Through all that, Mary continually gives credit to God and, through her trials, says she has gained a deeper understanding of his faithfulness.

Trying to juggle a busy writing and speaking career along with balancing the needs and responsibilities of family life requires nothing less than "constant prayer and recalibration". She says that it is important to keep in mind what is important to her, because "what works for one season, does not [always work for another season]." When her job, with its many deadlines, extra hours, travel, and stress affects her family life, her solution is to make family a priority. She simply won't take on any extra writing assignments and she focuses on the ones she does have, so she can get that finished and be able to spend time with her family.

When her life feels like "a little tornado" from the busyness, Mary has a prayer partner she meets with to pray with her. This enables her to get her life back in line. Taking a sabbatical, cancelling appointments, and cutting back on speaking events also helps her keep the stress down. Keeping the focus on "a few close friends, and the Lord, allows God to quicken in my heart the things in this next season," says Mary. Putting God first allows her focus to remain on what He has planned for her.

Mary is at peace with knowing that not all people appreciate her work. In fact, her own family quite often provides little support or appreciation for all Mary's efforts. That's

okay with Mary, though. She feels she is not writing for the approval of others. She writes because God called her to write and He gave her a “writer’s heart”. She says that her Christian family members recognize it as a calling and they see God’s hand on it. They still encourage her to be faithful to her calling, even if “they may not appreciate it.”

Life with chronic illness has allowed Mary Yerkes and her family to grow and live beyond the physical limitations by learning to depend on one another, love unconditionally, and follow a life God intended to be spent relying more on Him and less on ourselves.