



CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

TWO ARE BETTER CAREGIVING TOGETHER

By Karin Fendick

I am living a journey with chronic pain that I never asked for, but I have submitted to God's hand. I realized my husband was also thrust into this journey, walking a road he never expected. Years ago, when we read *The Five Love Languages* (by Gary Chapman), we learned that his love language is acts of service; knowing this is helpful to us both. He's always happy to help in any way he can. Doing additional chores or throwing a pizza in the oven when I can't cook is simple.

As Job said to his wife: *Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?* (Job 2:10)

What is harder for us to manage is the uncertainty. We never know when my disease is going to show itself in a new way or which symptoms will be troublesome on any given day. We never knew how unpredictable these types of diseases can be. We don't know what normal is anymore.

Rick is a detail-minded person and a planner. We have both learned to hold plans lightly, as they are always liable to change. Some days, things need to be canceled or activities shortened. Then there are times we have nothing scheduled but can do things spontaneously because it is a low-pain day.

Surprisingly, even in the middle of a flare, I can do things that support *his* life. I manage our finances, calendar, holiday plans, and more. He may have to take care of the grocery shopping sometimes, but when he needs clothes, shoes, or gardening supplies, I research and shop online (He was surprised and delighted with the winter boots I found for him this year.).

We laugh together often – at the funky but functional items I find at local online auctions or when I end up on the floor and have trouble figuring out how to get up again. (We sometimes feel like we're living in a situation comedy.) Flashes of joy and humor feed our hearts, lift our spirits, and help us through the days.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Our greatest help, however, is our relationship with God. We both know we can cry out to Him at any time. Each of us spends our quiet time with the Lord throughout the day, but my favorite time is before bed when we come before Him together. Nothing can strengthen a partnership more effectively than shared prayer.

We ask for and receive forgiveness from each other and God. We speak points of gratitude and things of wonder from the day that is ending. We conclude our time by releasing all that has happened to the Lord, good and bad, joys and fears, worries and plans. The slate is clean before we sleep.

PRAYER

Father God, You are our strength, our hope, and our everything. You bring people together to help each other in unique ways that we could never have imagined. Enable us to always show gratitude to those helpers—and to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

THINGS TO PONDER

- As caregivers tend to us, how can we care for them?
- Are there new ways we can show our appreciation to our caregivers?
- How can we help our caregivers find joy in their role?