CHRONIC JOY® DEVOTIONAL

THE POWERFUL PURPOSE & BENEFITS OF HANDWRITTEN NOTES

By Elyse Simon

You show that you are Christ's letter, delivered by us, not written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God— not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
(2 Corinthians 3:3)

The hardest thing about my chronic illness is the mental over stimulation that comes from the constant pain I experience, especially during a flare-up. The noise in my head makes it difficult to think. I struggle to keep up with the pace of simple conversations. I'm constantly worried that the discussion will veer off in a direction I don't anticipate and leave my mind behind. Digital communication is even more challenging.

Instead of trying to keep up with face-to-face communication and texts, I put #PenToPaper. I write because it helps me process what's going on and lets me control the flow of the conversation. During flare-ups, I write out assignments, create lists, and even make outlines for conversations I need to have. By putting pen to paper, I can process my day, sort my thoughts, and make room in my mind for something new. I recently found a new way to put pen to paper: ***writing letters to my friends.***

HANDWRITTEN NOTES ENCOURAGE AND FILL ME WITH HOPE

Handwritten notes encourage me and fill me with hope. Once or twice a month, I get a note from either my mom or someone from my home church. These notes always brighten my day! They remind me I'm not alone on my chronic illness journey. Even when the sender doesn't understand exactly what I'm going through, they can offer me love and support. That kindness has inspired me to write to *my* friends to encourage them as they walk through their own challenging circumstances.

I am blessed because even with chronic illness, *I have Jesus*. I have faith that He knows exactly what I'm going through. He experienced overwhelming pain on the cross, suffering separation and isolation from His Father. Even though I don't always understand why I have chronic illness, I trust that God does. Though not all my friends have this hope, I can still encourage them with faith-filled truths and reminders of God's love.

One of the best ways I have found to encourage my friends is to let them know what I'm learning from the crisis of the moment. We may have different illnesses and struggles, but we share similar experiences and questions about today and the future. God's truth speaks life. When I encourage my friends with truth, I remind myself of the hope I have. I remind myself what I need to hear. I remind myself I am not alone, even when my feelings tell me otherwise.

What I see as a weakness, God sees as an opportunity to spread His light.

God has given each of us a unique mission field based on our life story. Those of us with chronic illness and pain can offer hope to the hurting world around us. When a classmate, friend, or loved one is experiencing chronic illness or facing another difficult season of life, we can speak life to those in need of truth, hope, and encouragement.

How do *you* offer encouragement and speak life to those around you?

PRAYER

Father, You have used others to encourage us so many times. Thank You for this. Now, help us follow your promptings to do the same. Please help us grow in compassion and empathy towards those around us as we journey through our own struggles. Give us the courage to reach out and extend Your love today. In Jesus' name, amen.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Think of a time a note or word of encouragement came your way. How did it make you feel?
- Can you see what may be considered a weakness in your life as an opportunity?
- Prayerfully ask God to bring one person to mind that you could encourage today, and take a moment to write them a note.

Have you ever felt at a loss for words when you want to write a note expressing your love, appreciation, or thanks? Check out Chronic Joy's many resources to bring a sweet touch of encouragement to someone today.