

Find the *Joy* in the *Journey*

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- Amanda Grobbelaar -

*L*IFE is not for the faint at heart and for many, life is not a journey, it is an obstacle course.

“Goliath” can come in so many different shapes and sizes and how we deal with our “Goliath” will be personal and based on individual frames of reference.

In 2011, about 3 ½ years ago, I was told that I have Multiple Sclerosis. Nobody can sugarcoat MS. It is a very cruel medical condition for which there is currently no cure. My immune system betrayed me. Instead of protecting me, my immune system can at any time turn on me and try to attack and destroy my brain, my spinal cord and my optic nerves.

MS has the potential to completely cut off all communication between my brain and the rest

of my body to a point where everything shuts down. It can happen slowly and gradually or it can literally happen overnight.

I was only 42 years old, happily married with two teenage children when I got this news, so obviously I was faced with a huge dilemma: Was I going to stand on the pavement, for the rest of my days, waiting for the bus to hit, or was I going to live my best life now, despite my circumstances? I guess the ultimate challenge was: How on earth am I going to find joy in this journey?

Most importantly I acknowledged the power of positive thinking and I deliberately took every thought captive as per Roman 12's instruction to “renew our minds”.

I do not have the luxury to dwell on the “what if's” of life, because the possibilities for someone

living with MS is just way too scary. I choose to dwell on the things I am grateful for and I noticed that while I feel grateful I do not feel fearful. Obviously the two cannot co-exist.

Instead of focusing on the lies of the enemy, who came to steal, kill and destroy, I engraved the promises of the Lord on my heart and I meditate on it daily: He has plans for me to prosper, a hope and a future; He shall never leave me nor forsake me; I shall fear no evil, for His rod and His staff protect me; I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me; I am wonderfully and fearfully made; He is the Potter and I am the clay.

*I guard my heart and mind
vigilantly!*

Secondly, I retaliate. I refuse to roll over and play dead.

When the doctor said: “Mrs. Grobbelaar, I have some very bad news for you, you are in the middle of a very dark storm”, I responded with:

*“Then it is a good thing, that I know
the Captain on my ship, for He has
calmed many storms before”.*

MS caused lesions in my brain where my immune system previously attacked and tried to destroy my brain. When my neurologist said: “Mrs. Grobbelaar, your MRI will never come back clean”, I asked him to write on the outside cover of my file: **“Amanda Grobbelaar believes in miracles”**.

The medication I was prescribed to slow down progression caused my white blood count to drop to alarming levels and when my GP said: “Amanda, if you get a bacterial infection now, you are not going to make it” I remembered what Jesus had done for Lazarus and let’s face it, Lazarus had a much bigger problem than me. For man, a situation may seem impossible, but for God, all things are possible!



*...A woman who
fears the Lord will
be greatly praised.*

~Proverbs 31:30

Instead of letting the fear of landing up in a wheelchair or becoming bedridden, paralyze me, I joined the “Layzee Runners Running Club” and with their help mastered my first 5 km run about a year and a half ago.

On the 14th of February 2014 we organized a 5 km MS fundraiser fun run and raised \$2,150 to help the clever people find a cure for this chronic – you have it all the time, progressive – it gets worse over time, incurable – doctors cannot fix it, medical condition.

But wait, there is more!

After many hours of training and much blood, sweat and tears I completed my first BMA Mackay Marina 21.1 km half marathon on the 1st of June 2014. I did not walk once. I ran all the way and finished in 2 hours 22 minutes in honour of those who has already sadly lost their ability to walk. I guess as with everything else in life, it boils down to attitude.

*Instead of being angry or worry
about the day my legs give in, I
choose to be grateful for what I have
now and put them to good use now.*

May the clever people find a cure soon, as for too many it is a scary race against time.

After a particularly stressful time at work, I noticed a significant change in my ability to process and remember new information. I was a financial adviser and used to implementing complex financial strategies for my clients and I wasn't too bad with mathematics either, but all of a sudden I struggled to do the simplest calculations.

I underwent some neurological testing and 6 months ago, in August 2014 I was told that: “There has been some significant decline in certain memory functions. Of particular concern is the deterioration in her short-term memory and her ability to recall”. Ouch!!!!

And as if this was not big enough to deal with, 4 months ago, in October 2014 I read on my most recent MRI report:

“A small lesion in the left frontal convexity is likely to represent a meningioma.”

So I googled: What is a meningioma?

“A meningioma is a tumor that forms on membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord just inside the skull”.

Currently I have this brain destroying, incurable medical condition called MS, significant memory issues and a brain tumour, so how is it possible that I can boldly declare and rejoice that it is well with my soul?

*It is simple. I know the Chief
Commander of the Lord's army!*

His ways are much higher than my ways. How else can we explain the following:

Since being diagnosed with MS, 3 1/2 years ago, I have successfully completed a Certificate 4 in Margin Lending and Gearing, a Certificate 4 in Mortgage Broking, an Advanced Diploma in Financial Planning and a Certificate 4 in Ministry Leadership with honours.

The only reason I mention this is to illustrate that our worth and peace and joy do not have to rest on what we have or our circumstances, but purely on who we believe we are in Christ and what we believe we are capable of in Christ.

*Do not let anything stand in your
way of becoming everything God
intended you to be.*

On the 1st of August 2014, after 16 years in the industry, I closed the financial services door and knew for sanity to prevail, I had to find a new purpose; a new reason to go on.

I decided that I would use my story to encourage others. I have taken up public speaking, something I always wanted to do and receive enormous joy from making a difference in somebody else's life.

Sometimes my only purpose is to make others feel grateful about their own challenges and that's ok.

I always say, it is no use crying over what I think I have lost, I rather do the best I can today, with what I have today. I choose to live my best life now, despite my circumstances. I choose to make a positive difference for others.

I am anchored in the knowledge of who I am in Christ and what I am capable of in Christ. I fear no evil, because I know the Captain of my Ship; He still calms the storms today.

<http://www.amanda-faith-hope-love.com/>

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A U S T R A L I A



Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system, interfering with nerve impulses within the brain, spinal chord and optic nerves. It is characterised by sclerosis a Greek word meaning scars. These scars occur within the central nervous system and depending on where they develop, manifest into various symptoms.

MS is one of the most common diseases of the central nervous system with over 23,000 people living with the disease in Australia and more than two million diagnosed worldwide. There is currently no known cure for MS however there are several treatment options available to help manage symptoms.

For more information on Multiple Sclerosis, for help and support, or to donate to research, please visit the MS Australia website. - www.msaustralia.org.au