

Hugs of hope

by Judy Squier

Are you a hugger? There are huggers and non-huggers in this world. As for me, I've always been a non-hugger — at least I used to be. As a non-hugger, I extended no hugs nor did I willingly receive them. Why? It's hard to accept a hug if you consider yourself unlovable.

I never gave it much thought until the year I signed up for weekly counseling. One day the counselor posed the innocuous question: "If Adult Judy could speak to Little Judy, what would she say?"

I stared at the floor, remaining speechless for minutes. Suddenly I blurted out: "I don't want to talk to her, she's a freak."

The counselor moved her chair closer to mine, placing her hand on my forearm. I felt nothing. Then as if my intact right hand had a mind of its own, it reached over and hugged my deformed-from-birth left hand, as if to say, "You are loveable"

Things changed inside of me after that as evidenced by the following poem (and the fact I began extending semi-hugs to others).

Then came the day that I was promoted from being a semi-hugger to a full-fledged squeeze-them-until-they-pop hugger. I'd just finished a talk at a church outside

Judy's Poem

Broken.	I'm sad.
Cursed at birth.	I'm mad.
Loved.	At the same time, I'm glad."
Applauded.	
Yet pained, blamed, chained.	GOD SAVED THE DAY.
Afraid to complain.	Amazingly His Light shines blindingly bright through Broken People
Daybreak, Sonrise.	LIKE ME.
Set free.	
Permission to be me.	Judith Ann Rieder
Honesty.	Judy
"I hate my disability.	Mrs. David Squier
I hate the thief who robbed me of legs	God's Sanctified Escort
& barred me from the world of legs.	to lead others from the pit to PRAISE.

Atlanta. Initially I thought little Brantley must have mistaken me for someone famous, as he ran unabashedly into my arms to deliver his million-dollar hug. Unscathed by his own disability, he embraced me with a hug originating from the soles of his feet (that were in braces) to footless me seated in a wheelchair. Without words his hug communicated, “You are loveable and don’t forget it.”

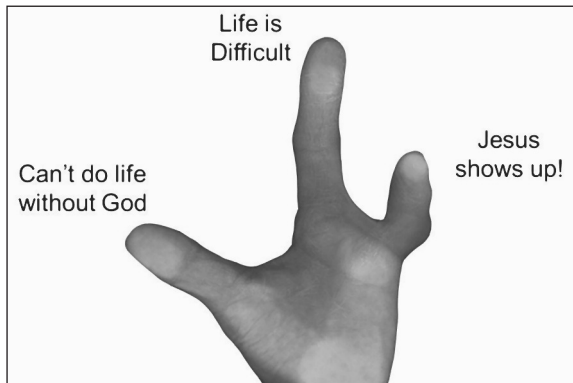
Leave it to God to use this little tike to deliver a hug from heaven — a hug that I’d been unwilling to receive. A hug that communicated: *I love you My precious one; You are perfect in My eyes. Listen up: What you consider unhuggable about your body, that’s where I’ve hidden My hug. Be like Brantley and extend My hugs unabashedly to others.*

A year later I was in Romania speaking to a room full of

mothers — mothers with disabled children. Unscripted my left hand popped out of hiding to extend a Hug of Hope from God’s heart to mine to theirs and to their children.

And to you, dear reader, my left hand which is not-quite-whole, but holy in His design extends God’s Hug of Hope from His heart to mine to yours. Hear ye, hear ye, it’s my three-point sermon:

1) Life is difficult; 2) Can’t do life without God; 3) Jesus shows up!



Judy Squier is an author and inspirational speaker. Learn more at www.judysquier.com



Judy and Brantley