

compound where my brother serves as a surgeon. Dick loses much of his independence during these trips because we cannot take his electric scooter and have to push his wheelchair through the bush and along bone-jarring paths. Although my hands are covered with blisters after each trip, it is all worth it. I recall, for example, sitting with a Bengali family on the floor of a one-room mud hut, eating a meal our hosts served to show their gratitude.

People want to see the gospel, not just hear it. Dick tries to be an example to people so they can do just that. If he had died when the doctors predicted, Dick wouldn't have had this opportunity to emotionally and

spiritually impact people's lives.

Dick isn't immune to discouragement, but he knows what to do when it strikes. He commemorated the 30th anniversary of his diagnosis with a letter to our friends and family. In it, he said, "Life isn't fair — we all know that. But if you know Christ, there's no reason to get down. I know prayer has made the difference and made the impossible possible!" □

Dick, Kathy and Matthew Wilson enjoy an active lifestyle in Hobe Sound, Florida. Share a video of their story with others at [ReelFM.tv](http://ReelFM.tv).



**H**ave you, a friend or a loved one been diagnosed with an incurable disease? Are you going through a seemingly endless difficulty? Do your circumstances have you totally discouraged? Dick and Kathy are sharing their story to give others hope and encouragement: With God, you can make it. With prayer, you can discover the strength to press on for one more day. Have you talked to the Lord about your situation? Maybe now is the time.

*Dear God,*

*I have reached the end of my rope, and I realize that without You, I have absolutely nowhere to turn. Nowhere to find help and hope. I am asking You to come to my aid just now. I am in need of Your presence and power. Thank You for listening and for caring.*

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song." — Psalm 28:7

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If you'd like someone to talk to, I'm available ..

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone/cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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# amazing LOVE shared

BY KATHY WILSON  
AS TOLD TO AVA PENNINGTON

He taught high school math and science at St. Petersburg Christian School; I taught physical education. The math teacher and the gym teacher — who would've thought?

Dick Wilson had everything I looked for in a man. He was sensitive, funny, handsome, and loved the Lord. He was athletic and adventurous, enjoying activities such as skiing, skydiving, swimming and racquetball. He was smart, too. After serving for several years in the U.S. Navy, he completed a master's degree in biology. What more could I ask for?

Certainly not ALS.



LIFENOTES

Dick had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, better known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, a neurodegenerative condition that attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, resulting in muscle weakness and atrophy. Most people who develop ALS are between the ages of 40 and 70; the average life span after diagnosis is three to five years. Dick's ALS was discovered when he was 26; the doctors gave him two to five years to live.

But we met six years after his diagnosis. He told me later that he was immediately smitten by my blue eyes. We had so much in common — sports, coaching and enjoyment of the beach. Our hearts were knit together — with love for each other and for the Lord.

Still, the doctors said a future with ALS meant little or no future at all. Dick was living on borrowed time.

When he proposed, I wondered if marriage was a wise step. It was a hard decision, but after much prayer, I realized it was the right one. I knew

where we both stood spiritually, and I knew in whose hands we were. I could help Dick with the things he needed to do. He's very intelligent

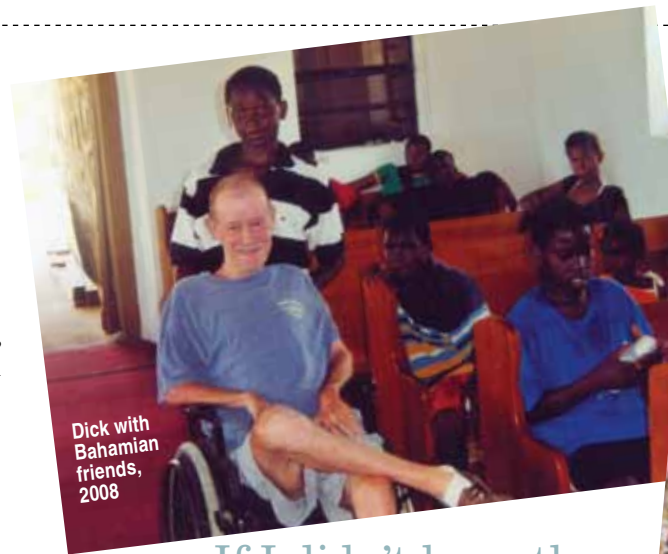
and sensitive but needed physical assistance.

We said "I do" and worked side by side as teachers at a Christian school of approximately 800 students in Nassau, Bahamas. Eleven years later, our son, Matthew, was born. Dick's increasing difficulty in walking, talking and maneuvering in the school setting necessitated our return to the United States in 1995.

Adding to the frustration caused by his own physical limitations, Dick has had to watch me work around our home, knowing he can't help. Given our limited budget, I handle things like changing the oil in the car and keeping up with the never-ending yard work generated by Florida's year-round growing season. Of course, I also help Dick bathe, dress, eat and so forth.

Dick has his own family duties, however. He homeschools Matthew in math and science, and spends several hours a day on the computer — banking, stock trading, keeping up with e-mail and working on our taxes. He also tutors other homeschooled students in upper-level mathematics, assisting parents who are overwhelmed by the subject.

Despite the doctors' original prognosis, it has been more than 33 years since my husband's original diagnosis. Re-evaluations with neurosurgeons in Chicago, Gainesville (Fla.) and Boston confirm that he does indeed have ALS, but he is one of the world's three longest-living survivors of



If I didn't have the Lord, I might have thrown in the towel long ago, but the Lord is my strength.

the disease. The most famous of them: British physicist Stephen Hawking.

I have to admit that I do struggle with occasional bouts of discouragement. If I didn't have the Lord, I might have thrown in the towel long ago, but the Lord is my strength. Sometimes I think, "What have I done?" But those times are rare. I remind myself of what I'm supposed to be doing, what I'm here for. My responsibility as Dick's wife is to be whatever help he needs.

Dick has a total dependence on God, from the time he wakes in the morning to the time he goes to bed at night. Prayer — ours and others' — keeps us going. When we get up in the morning, we have to choose to have the right attitude for the day. I pray all

the time. The more I read God's Word and pray, the better my attitude is. My husband continually amazes, inspires and encourages me. If I had a disease that was slowly killing me, I think I would have given up long ago.

In spite of Dick's physical limitations, we have tried to combine a spirit of adventure with our faith and dependence on God. We've journeyed to places most people in good health avoid, from isolated islands to the deep bush. During the past several years, we've made an annual trek to a remote island in the Bahamas to assist missionary friends by running an annual basketball camp.

In 2000 and 2005, we traveled to Bangladesh to teach in the mission

