

## THE JOY BRACELET

The JOY bracelet was created as a way to communicate a beautiful outcome from a tragic event. In 1997, Nelia Hoogenhout and her family left their beloved South Africa, family and friends, to move to Canada. On a cold and icy morning their first winter in Toronto, Nelia slipped on a stretch of black ice. She found herself lying on the sidewalk in the snow, not being able to move at all.

In the frightening days and weeks that followed, Nelia found herself enveloped by a quiet, inexplicable sense of peace, that "...surpassed all understanding". She realized throughout her slow but eventual recovery, that it was possible to have total joy in one's life. A joy not dependent upon one's current circumstances, but rather, joy in the One who carries us through the difficult times, discouraging surroundings, darkened situations. And this joy is also possible because of those who walk with us through to the other side of our difficult circumstances, encouraging our hearts and demonstrating His love for us along the way.

Nelia and her family lived in Canada for six years. But then, they realized that the Lord had another plan for them. That plan was based on Luke 8:38: "Go home and tell how much God has done for you." The Lord was calling them to return to South Africa. A very private person, Nelia then asked the Lord to reveal to her the way she could best express this good news, this joy from Him, His hope for others.

While in Toronto, Nelia had seen a bracelet designed to tell the Gospel message using beautiful stones. She believed a bracelet could be used in her country as well, to convey the joy she had experienced. So, Nelia and her sister Elsa du Plessis designed a bracelet based on Galatians 5:22, with nine coloured stones, each representing one fruit of the Spirit.

They used the vibrant colours and artistry of the people right around them to create the design and actual production of the bracelets, as additional examples of His love and provision in their lives. The JOY bracelet was born. They are beautiful to wear with their joyful colours and unusual design and the beaded versions are made by

local townswomen. But the woman who owns and wears the bracelet is given a very tangible reminder that each coloured stone or bead represents a duty as well:

- To offer love
- To exude His joy
- To be His peace
- To have His patience
- To show His kindness
- To demonstrate His goodness
- To trust His faithfulness
- To be His gentleness
- To exercise His self-control.

When all these attributes are lived out daily, by the woman who wears the JOY bracelet, then every member of that woman's family, and all her friends and acquaintances, will be touched and changed by that as well. This in turn can bring change and hope to a neighborhood, a community, a people. Just as Nelia felt His guiding Hand of inexplicable joy and peace during the uncertain days of her slow and painful recovery from her fall, so it is possible even for a nation to also trust Him for a recovery. **One that must begin in the heart of each person in that nation.**

Change is possible. Change, with the Lord's masterful help, is certain. The fruits of the Spirit are part of His plan to bring hope to His children. The women who make the JOY bracelets are pouring their hope from HIM into each bracelet, knowing that this can be beautifully transferred to the women who wear the JOY bracelets and are **challenged to live out the message each bracelet represents.** From paralysis of the past, comes newfound hope and healing for the future.. Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-Control. Wear the bracelet. Know His Joy. Be thankful. Pass it on.

By Robin Dias