



Ninety-six percent of people with chronic medical conditions live with an illness that is “invisible.” They don’t wear any special equipment; they don’t look different from most other people. They don’t have symptoms that can be seen. Even their doctors may have a hard time pinning down exactly what is going on in their bodies. And yet, for some people, the simplest tasks of getting up and getting dressed for the day can be a huge struggle.

People with illnesses such as fibromyalgia, lupus, migraines, and celiac disease may find normal activities such as sitting, reading, concentrating, and eating will take them five times longer to accomplish than such actions do for other people who are not sick. Some of them experience constant, severe pain. Yet they learn to cope with it to the extent that someone just passing them on the street would not necessarily be able to tell they were suffering. They don’t spend all day screaming or twisting in anguish—but some days they feel like they could.

Living with people who are suffering from such illnesses requires a lot of understanding, compassion, and patience. Author Jessica Riley recently launched the Invisible Cosmic Zebra Collection—a series of workbooks to help recently diagnosed patients understand their conditions and get an idea about how to cope. For more than a decade, this author dealt with unexplained health issues and worked with a team of doctors to understand. Now, she is using her experience to encourage patients to visualize their condition as an Invisible Cosmic Zebra that they have to take care of. More information on the series can be found at www.invisibleillnessbooks.com.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:

Have you ever known someone who struggled with an invisible illness? What do you know about how they felt?

If you found out someone was struggling with chronic illness, what would your reaction be? What do you think you could do to help that person?

Maybe you don’t have a chronic illness, but there are times when all of us struggle with something that no one on the outside can see. What do you do when you are hurting inside? Who can you talk to?

There are many forces at work in people that we cannot see. The Bible talks about some kinds of invisible yet powerful forces at work in our world. Let’s look at three duties of angels—God’s invisible messengers.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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