

Man Uses Grip As Ministry Tool

Tommy Heslep is uncommonly strong. He can crush potatoes with his fists and bend coins in his teeth. Yet he says God is the source of his strength.



At only 5 feet 10 inches and 170 pounds, Heslep, 33, has one of the strongest grips in the world, and he uses his impressive physical ability as a tool for evangelism. He often visits churches near his hometown of Front Royal, Va., and ministers to the youth at his church, First Assembly of God. But he also has appeared in unlikely “pulpits,” such as on the Tonight Show With Jay Leno, and at last year's Awakening Music Festival, where he performed before a crowd of 10,000.

At events, he often asks the crowd if they know what held Jesus on the cross. “Most of the time they holler out, ‘The nails!’” says Heslep (). “And I tell them, ‘The nails were the instrument, but what really held [Him] on the cross was love.’ Then I show them what I like to do with nails.”

What he likes to do with nails is drive them into boards with his hands. But he says his goal is to glorify God, not himself. Last year, he was diagnosed with Crohn's disease and lost more than 20 pounds as a result. He says God orchestrated a miraculous recovery after he read The Maker's Diet by Jordan Rubin, who also suffered from the gastrointestinal disease.

Now when he bends a bolt or rips telephone books in half, he's also sharing his testimony: “I tell people, ‘Look what Jesus can do.’”