



Dyslexia - Thoughts and Personal Perspectives

Dyslexia - A Mom's Story

Our daughter had some eye crossing issues when she was three that led us to put her in bifocals and to do hours of vision therapy as well as eye surgery. I believe this helped her greatly and was instrumental in an early diagnosis of dyslexia. God in His wisdom had led me to study the education of the visually impaired during college, which helped me as I now had the care of one of His precious children with eye issues as my responsibility to raise. I would love to share some of the tips He gave us in this journey.

We were homeschooling at the time that we believed our 7 year old needed testing for dyslexia and are so thankful for Scottish Rite's testing program. I cannot tell you how thankful I am that we had practiced putting into words our belief in our children. When this child was asked by the tester if she thought she was smart, her answer was, "Oh, yes. I am very smart. My mommy told me so." These kids with learning disabilities seem to fight with self-image every day of their lives. Children seem to draw much from their school successes or failures to determine their self-image. Even if you are not one to give positive encouragement through words usually, I urge you to make that a habit for all of your children, but especially if your child has a learning disability. I am not talking about flattery. I am talking about putting in words the Truthful statements that God Himself would make about your child when He looks at His beautiful creation. He does not make mistakes. He designs perfectly the child He creates to fulfill perfectly the role He has established for their lives. State that. Declare that daily over your child – when you struggle, when they struggle, when you pray for them, and when you talk to them. However, remember: It must be truth. Do not say things you do not know to be true in God's eyes! Plus, expect them to work hard...and to succeed. As Moms, we would love to pull them out of the battle, but that will do far more harm than good. If the environment is tearing your child down and is irreparable, then move to another environment and help them succeed there. We should make it our goal to equip them for the battle and support them in struggles so they can reach victory, not hide them from healthy struggles that strengthen and build confidence.

The battles for success became intense during middle school years. At that point, in desperation to see my child happy with how God made her and the struggles He allowed her to face, I told her to begin thanking Him for the struggle. I assured her that it did not matter that she was not thankful for it yet, but to begin



with the truth that she wanted to become thankful for this struggle. Over the next several years, we saw this struggle and thanksgiving become a key in her success and self-image. Rather than having a defeated child, we saw a strong, independent, compassionate young lady emerge. I would not choose this battle for my child, but now that we are on the other side of the battle, I would not trade the character that it built for all the shallow victories of an easy life. (Our daughter graduated with highest honors from high school and college and went on to get her master's degree as well.) In fact, watching their sister struggle through this and going through their own personal struggles, made her sisters very compassionate for all who struggle as well.

Another thing I did was to look up names of famous people that are dyslexic (Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, DaVinci, Picasso, Spielberg, etc.) and printed it off. My daughter then placed that list at her desk or by her bed or in her notebook or next to her computer to look at frequently when she felt discouraged.

I am sure that many things have been improved since we worked so hard with our daughter who was diagnosed in 1997. Take advantage of every source available, as with our daughter, some things will help; some will not – try as much as is possible. Some of the things that were available when we needed them were: *Alpha Phonics* (which we borrowed from a neighborhood school), *Explode the Code* (phonics workbooks we used at home), tutoring, colored overlays, public library tapes of required reading, Library of Congress recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic Student. I helped with studying spelling and terms by writing them on note cards for her to study every free moment. We went to The Lewisville Learning Center (in Lewisville, Texas) with Dr. Kenneth Lane for vision therapy and lastly to The Success Learning Center in Tyler, Texas which used the Davis Technique. This technique is described briefly in the book *The Gift of Dyslexia* by Davis, which I recommend to all! I also advocated for my child to get accommodations when she was in a small private school. Accommodations are extended time for tests, proctors that read the test to them, etc. They were very gracious to help us since most small schools are not equipped for such help. (If your child never uses accommodations in school, the chances are much smaller for her to be approved for the time extension on the SAT.)

You may not know now whether your dyslexic child will go to college or not. But, if you keep good records and plan ahead, it may keep the door open in case God leads her to take that path. Not all students should go to college – but all should feel free to follow whatever path God leads them to take. Our daughter felt led to go to college, and I am so glad we were able to help get her extended time on



her SAT by keeping good records early on. Since her high school years were spent at a small non-accredited school, the SAT scores were critical to her acceptance by universities and actually helped her get academic scholarships and test credit for some of her basics.

The section on Extended Time for the SAT may help you if you do not have access to a high school counselor that can help you with that application. Start a file on her education and medical progression as early as you can. I believe that in this case, more information means more evidence of need, which means better chance of receiving extra time.

I also believe that persistence is key as well. We sent in the request three times, making the needed adjustments that SAT requested upon each rejected application. We kept battling for our daughter, and we saw God give her the victory.

Each child is different as is each struggle and each victory. With that in mind, I am including a few of my daughter's words that she wrote as a teenager to encourage another teen with a learning disability. Maybe some of these words will help your child.

Dyslexia - Through a Daughter's Eyes

I thought of dyslexia as a curse. That God had made a mistake when He made me, that I was a mistake. I felt that God was punishing me with it but didn't know why, so I resented that punishment. I was hurting so bad that all anyone had to do was mention dyslexia, and I would start crying immediately. Doctors said that I could get a little better, but they had never heard of anyone growing out of it. I didn't believe that. I was going to fix "God's mistake" if it took my whole life trying, even if it was the last thing I did. So I worked very hard, during the summer, after school with tutors, and any extra time I had. I would study for hours for spelling tests and other tests (if misspelled words would mean points off) and even if points weren't going to be taken off, I was going to spell them right no matter what. I was going to be like everyone else. My mom and tutors would tell me that I had made so many improvements, but I couldn't see any. I felt that everyone else was against me, just waiting for me to mess up, so I never told anyone in fear that they would make fun of me. (Occasionally, I would let my mom tell one of her friends about my dyslexia for prayer requests, but she would always ask me first).

She wanted me to be ok with how God made me, so she decided that every night



before I went to sleep I would thank God for giving me dyslexia. Mom said that she didn't care if I didn't believe what I was saying or even if I told God I didn't believe it, but I was supposed to say it anyway. And sure enough, months later, I realized that I wasn't as mad at God or I wasn't crying as much. I began to believe that God had made me perfect and exactly the way He wanted. That God had a perfect plan for me, and whatever that plan was, dyslexia fit right in. Like a puzzle, all we see is a little of it put together and thousands of pieces spread out. We can't put the pieces together or see how they fit together, but I know that if dyslexia wasn't a piece to my puzzle then a huge part of that puzzle would be missing. Because God is the only one that can know how our life will look like at the end, I had to just throw up my hands and say, 'It's all yours. Take it and use it for Your glory.' A year later we moved, (I was going into the 7th grade) and I still had seen hardly any improvements. As I was packing, I found some journals that were my homework in 5th grade. Right then God showed me how much I had improved over the years. I'm still shy about telling people, but when I do, God has helped me to use it to glorify Him and has always given me the words to say. Now I thank God sincerely for dyslexia, and He has shown me just how much of a "gift" it really is. My dyslexia is much better than it was when I was "fixing it" on my own. Through Him is the only way I was able to "fix it". Please don't get me wrong, I still have it, and it's still very prominent in my life; but I am able to look past the difficulties, and see how God can use it to bless others.

I had to realize several things before I was able to share my testimony with others. The first is I had to believe the phrase "God don't make no junk." I knew He was a perfect God and couldn't make mistakes, but I still thought that I was an exception. He doesn't make exceptions for anyone. We are all the same "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalms 139:14). This verse has helped me a lot. I use it when I get a bad test score back and have made stupid mistakes that I knew the answers to, or when I'm called on to read for the class and feel I did a bad job, or when things are just going wrong and I feel like I have tons of homework, I remember this verse.

Another thing that I still have to work on sometimes is that I'm not stupid. We just think differently when it comes to spelling ...who cares about spelling anyway. No one ever knows that I have dyslexia until I tell them (unless I have to spell or read in front of them)...but in everything else we are brilliant, and I mean that. If we're not perfect, then what is the standard of perfection? We are just comparing ourselves to other human beings that have something that they don't



like about themselves that makes them “not perfect.” What helps me every time I feel different is that I remember 2 Cor. 10:12. It says “...*But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*” What I like about this verse is that it says you “are not wise,” but it doesn’t say you are a fool, so I think that God knows that we are just a pile of dirt, literally, and that sometimes we can’t help but look at others and see what they have. I believe that He knew it would be natural for us to compare, so that’s why this verse is here to remind us that God made everyone different, with different disabilities and different strengths, and we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” If you were the same as me or the top person in your class academically, you wouldn’t be able to reach the people that you can because God made you so you can explain things in a way that I could never dream of explaining and teach people’s heart that I couldn’t because you have gone through things that I haven’t, and I have gone through things that you haven’t.

Another thing is that you have to realize that there really are people in this world that need you as a friend and need you to need them. I have also learned that there will be people everywhere you go that need others to make fun of to help them feel better about themselves. What they say hurts, believe me I know, but what I think they need most of all is us to show them God’s love. It’s very hard. There are people that get on my nerves and are so annoying, but what I have found to help me the most to forgive them and be kind to them is prayer. I know, easier said than done, but pray that you won’t let hatred destroy your life. Pray that God would show His love to them through us, and pray for anything that you can think of that might be the reason for their attitude (family problems, deaths in the family, etc.)

I love this verse, “*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rather rest upon me,*” (2 Cor. 12:9). This verse is special to me because I know that whatever God wants me to do He will provide a way or will give the strength I need or the words to say, but whatever He wants me to do I’ll be able to do it with His help. Lately I have been worried about college.... This verse helps remind me that in college He will provide the time and energy to make it through all the homework and still have fun.

These verses have helped me in the past Matthew 28:20 “...*And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,*” because I take comfort in that He will never leave me even if in the future I leave Him; and Philippians 4:13 “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,*” this helps me to remember that only



through God can I do anything. What I think is amazing about this verse is that Paul was imprisoned and had been beaten, and he still glorified God for everything and even wrote a book of the Bible to encourage other Christians. I don't know about you, but I have never experienced that sort of stuff, and I know right now that I couldn't do that alone.

There is one more thing that I would like to share with you and that is I love music and I have found that when I'm down, singing praises to God is totally how to raise my spirit. There is a song that Steven Curtis Chapman sings that is called Fingerprints of God. When I heard that song I felt like he was singing to me. The chorus and second verse spoke directly to my heart, I felt like he knew my story and had sung his response.

Fingerprints of God
by Steven Curtis Chapman
(chorus and verse 2)

*I can see the fingerprints of God
When I look at you
I can see the fingerprints of God
And I know it's true
You're a masterpiece
That all creation quietly applauds
And you're covered with the fingerprints of God*

*Never has there been and never again
Will there be another you
Fashioned by God's hand
And perfectly planned
To be just who you are
And what He's been creating
Since the first beat of your heart
Is a living breathing priceless work of art...*

*Just look at you
You're a wonder in the making
Oh, and God's not through, no
In fact, He's just getting started and...*

To sum it up, my whole life I have begged God to take away the thorn in my side (as Paul did three times), and my whole life I thought it was "No."The whole



time God was just saying “Wait, I’m not through with this part of the picture.”

I have surrendered my life to whatever God has for me to do in the future and feel it will have something to do with working with handicapped or abused children using horse or animal therapy. Whatever the future holds, I know that my life is in His hands, and as He has helped me through some difficult times, He has provided all that I have needed and will always continue to do so.