



Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans you give you hope and a future."

April is Autism Awareness Month, and I am focusing today on helping us to understand this complex and broad spectrum of health. The poster I put here says in a few words what I am seeing as I talk with, walk with, listen to, hug, pray for, and search for ways to help our faith family make a difference in the lives of those among us who have some form of the autism spectrum disorder that challenges parents, grandparents, teachers,

friends, pastors, and the medical community!

In 2014, the CDC estimated the prevalence in the U.S. to be present in one of every 68 births – now considered to be the fastest growing developmental disability.

This has opened opportunities for us to consider how to help families facing a lifetime of supports for their children. The autism diagnosis affects every member of the family in different ways. Many times in my observation of support group activities, I have been simply amazed and blessed at the broad spectrum of interactions and the wide age range of those who are making a difference in someone's life. My own mother became a caregiver for a great grandchild when she was in her 70's and he was just entering school. I recall being so moved by the ways she could help him decompress before bedtime. They would sit on the floor together with their cup of sleepy time tea and honey and share stories, sing, draw their feelings, and she would sense when he was ready to walk together to the softly lit bedroom with a west facing window. He would tuck in, say prayers, and look out of the window to find the bright planet, Venus and sleepily say, "Good night Venus", "Good night God"....the memory of that calm dedication helped me through the glorious years of child rearing. I still find myself looking for Venus and saying "Good Night..."

Finding time for prayer and attending worship also helps many families handle the challenges of autism, and provides a safe, inclusive environment for both the child and family. I would like to hear stories of ways our faith family has found strength and coping skills in dealing with this very challenging disorder. Please take a few moments to write your small story about a moment and your way of making it positive for you and your child. I am looking for ways we, as a faith family, can reach out with understanding and support to those who need us to live the faith we have been taught and help these young people grow in the image of their creator. Are there any favorite scripture helps you use?

Stay tuned. I will have more to share next week. May God keep you walking to Jerusalem! (We have a ways to go!)

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