

March 2019

THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

Speak Life: Ensuring Our Words Match Our Beliefs

by Stacia McKeever

Kieran, our oldest son, is a happy kid who loves to read books, use his weed whacker, wander around with our chickens, and learn about tarantulas and didgeridoos. He brings us great joy, and we are so blessed to have him in our lives.

He's nine now, but when he was nine months old, he was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder called Williams syndrome. Williams syndrome is caused by a deletion of about 25 genes on the seventh chromosome and can lead to physical, cognitive, and developmental disabilities. It is considered a "spontaneous" mutation, meaning my husband and I are not carriers of the disorder.

As part of his syndrome, Kieran has a heart condition called supravalvular aortic stenosis, which requires periodic monitoring. He has intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities such as low muscle tone, making it more difficult for him to write and coordinate his movements.

But we're thankful that the Lord created him fearfully and wonderfully and gave him to us (Psalm 139:14).

Embrace or Eliminate?

As Christians who embrace a life-affirming

worldview, we often discuss how beautifully designed the human body is—a masterpiece of God's creation. So how does a child with a genetic disorder, or anyone with a disability, fit into this worldview?

This is an important pro-life question to answer, for ourselves as well as for the generations coming after us—those with disabilities and those without. And the pro-*all*-life worldview we teach our children today will inform their actions tomorrow.

According to one research study, "Since prenatal screening tests were introduced in Iceland in the early 2000s, the vast majority of women—close to 100 percent—who received a positive test for Down syndrome terminated their pregnancy. . . According to the most recent data available, the United States has an estimated termination rate for Down syndrome of 67 percent (1995–2011); in France it's 77 percent (2015); and Denmark, 98 percent (2015)."¹ And how many babies with other types of disabilities (including Williams syndrome) are killed while still in their mothers' wombs?

Abortion is not the only possible tragic outcome. Far too many have rejected God and the Christian faith once their child was diagnosed with some type of disability. We need to make sure that we're encouraging an all-encompassing pro-life attitude and a proper view of God in ourselves and in our children *today* so that they're prepared for what they may face tomorrow.

The Specific Sense

When we study God's Word, we see that God, as the Creator, is sovereign over his creation. This

means he is not a laissez-faire deity that wound up his creation and now lets it go as it pleases. He created it in the beginning and is still actively involved in sustaining his creation.

We do not serve an impotent deity who is unable to accomplish his purposes or whose hands are somehow tied. We serve the living Creator of the universe who is in active control of his creation. And just as God is in control of the intricate workings of the universe, I believe he is also in control of the intricate workings of conception.

God takes credit for forming the Prophet Jeremiah just as he wanted him to be.

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

David praises God for making him fearfully and wonderfully.

For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, When I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, The days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:13–16).

From studying such Bible verses, we know that God is the author of life. He forms each one of us and knits us together carefully and purposefully while we are still in the womb. And we use these verses with our healthy children. Yet if God is the author of life, mustn't we also say that God is the author of the lives with physical, mental, or emotional problems?

Pernicious or Providential

God gave our son (and each one of us) a specific genetic combination, which in our son's case included a deletion of part of one of his chromosomes. The world may call it a "spontaneous" mutation, but I call it a providential one. The genetic

mutation that pervades each cell of our son's body has effects that can be seen more apparently—from his facial features to his heart and kidney problems to his learning disabilities. Yet each one of us is suffering from 6,000 years of the curse. In fact, which one of us would say that we have a completely perfect body and mind? Our problems may not be as apparent as Kieran's, but we have them just the same.

So how many mutations—or which *specific* mutations—separate the "normal" people from those with "disorders"? If we're not prepared to say that God created and fashioned each and every person, at what point do we say, "Yes, *you* manifest the handiwork of God, but *you* don't"?

One theologian defined *disability* this way: "the degree to which we are able to fulfill the mandate God gave Adam in the beginning—to be 'fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Genesis 1:28).² How many of us can say that we're able to perfectly fulfill this command?

When God called Moses to go to the Egyptian pharaoh and ask for the release of his people, Moses made excuses for why he couldn't go by pointing out to his Creator that he was "slow of speech and of tongue." The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? (Exodus 4:11).

In this passage, *God* is taking credit for making some people blind and some deaf. It's no great extrapolation to also include that God creates some with genetic disorders and other things we consider "defects."

The Glory of God

So what is the purpose behind disabilities, pain, and suffering? This is a question that theologians have raised for centuries.

First, I believe that he creates everyone for a reason: to bring glory to himself. Paul writes in his letter to the people in Rome,

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36)

Second, I believe he fashions us as he does for our good.

As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:1-3)

Although mutations, diseases, disabilities, and suffering are part of the curse and are the result of our sin in Adam, they aren't necessarily a direct result of any specific sin that we've committed. Jesus makes this clear here. Although the man and his parents were sinners, his blindness wasn't the direct result of a sin that they had committed.

So why was he blind? Why does God make us—every imperfect one of us—the way he does? So that the works of God might be displayed in our life.

Speak Life about Disability

An article from LifeNews.com said, "Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion are both internationally renowned singers. They have two of the most beautiful voices in the world. But in addition to being amazing singers, they have one other thing in common."³

The article goes on to explain that when Andrea Bocelli's mother was pregnant with him, she had an attack of appendicitis. After the treatments, the doctors encouraged her to abort him because they believed he would be born with disabilities. She refused, and Andrea was born blind. But, in spite of that, he has blessed many with his talents in music. Celine Dion's mother was pregnant with her 14th child and didn't believe she could care for another baby. She asked her priest for permission to abort the baby. The priest told her she could not. And over these past many years, Celine Dion has also blessed many with her musical abilities.

The article ends with this: "Listen to them sing

together, a song called 'The Prayer.' And think about what the world would have lost had these two people been lost to abortion. Imagine what the world HAS lost because of over 50 million abortions in the US alone."

Speak Truth about Life

It is true that each child is a gift and blessing from God, but I think we also need to be honest that disability is hard. It is difficult to see your child struggle and even suffer. Medical bills can rack up. In our quest to contend for life with these types of arguments, we are perhaps unwittingly buying into a form of prosperity gospel where we only want to talk about the good aspects. Part of speaking life is speaking and embracing truth about life. If we gloss over the difficulty of disability, we aren't dealing with real life, and we can't accurately minister to individuals who find themselves in these situations.

We serve a God who gives grace for every day and every situation. We also serve a God who uses his people—you and me—to encourage and help those going through difficult situations. When is the last time you've looked for an opportunity to not only speak life but also share life and provide tangible, practical help to someone?

How do we view our fellow human beings? And how do we talk about—and to—them? There are many ways we can use our tongues to speak life. Let's examine the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts toward our fellow image bearers as we strive to speak life.

Footnotes

- 1 - Julian Quinones and Arijeta Lajka, "What Kind of Society Do You Want to Live in?": Inside the Country Where Down Syndrome Is Disappearing," CBS, August 14, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/down-syndrome-iceland/>.
- 2 - Mark Talbot, "Longing for Wholeness: Chronic Suffering and Christian Hope," Desiring God, November 8, 2012, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/longing-for-wholeness-chronic-suffering-and-christian-hope#/watch/full>.
- 3 - Sarah Terzo, "Andrea Bocelli and Celine Dion: Two Amazing Singers Who Were Almost Victims of Abortion," May 26, 2014, <http://www.lifenews.com/2014/05/26/andrea-bocelli-and-celine-dion-two-amazing-singers-who-were-almost-victims-of-abortion/>

To read the full article go to: https://answersingenesis.org/sanctity-of-life/speak-life-ensuring-our-words-match-our-beliefs/?utm_source=article&utm_medium=email&utm_content=1-banner-cta&utm_campaign=20180602&mc_cid=df2fd07890&mc_eid=2d8471d623

FUNNIES

A poultry farmer was experimenting to breed turkeys with more legs for greater profits. Finally, he succeeded.

While narrating the results to his friends, he told them “the turkey I bred had six legs!”

His friends, who had got quite excited, eagerly asked, “What about the taste?”

The farmer said with a long-drawn face, “I have no idea. Can’t catch it.”

Football is a dangerous sport and players can be hurt while playing. That happened to a friend of mine in a college game who was hit pretty hard on one play.

The doctor came onto the field while we all stood around him, waiting to learn how badly he was hurt. In order to do that the doctor asked my friend a few questions as he lay on the field.

“What’s three plus three?” the doctor asked him.

“Seven,” my friend said.

“What’s the capital of the United States?”

“Alabama.”

“Which state is farther east, California or Florida?”

“California.”

At that point the doctor thought that

my friend was confused and probably had suffered a brain concussion so he told the coach to take him out of the game.

But I quickly spoke up. “Don’t do that, Doc. Let him play. He’s alright. He didn’t know that stuff even before he was hit.”

Little Johnny asked his Grandma how old she was.

Grandma answered, “39 and holding.”

Johnny thought about that and then asked: “And how old would you be if you let go?”

The middle-aged man was shuffling along, bent over at the waist as his wife helped him into the doctor’s waiting room. A woman in the office viewed the scene with sympathy. “Arthritis with complications?” she asked.

The wife shook her head. “Do-it-yourself,” she explained, “with concrete blocks.”

Life insurance agent to prospect: “Don’t let me fright you into a decision. Sleep on it tonight and if you wake up in the morning let me know what you think.”