

Special Needs Kids Don't Need Special Parents

When my son was diagnosed with autism, I thought God had picked the wrong mom. Then I remembered Moses.

[Diane Dokko Kim](#)

It was just a piece of paper, weighing less than an ounce, but it was the heaviest burden I would ever hold. Some papers cut deeper than others: divorce papers, a Do Not Resuscitate form, or even a pink slip. Are they “just a piece of paper”? Hardly. On August 20, 2004, a four-by-six-inch piece of paper leveled my world, when a pediatric neurologist scribbled onto a prescription pad and slid it across his desk:

Patient meets diagnostic criterion 299.00 of the DSM-IV. Moderate to severe autism. Severely disabled. Mentally retarded. Cognitively impaired. Non-verbal. Aggressive intervention of 40 weekly hours of applied behavioral analysis, speech therapy, occupational therapy, plus ancillary supports strongly advised. Prognosis unknown.

After months of speculation, evaluations, and dread, our firstborn was diagnosed with [autism](#).

Just like history is divided into BC and AD, so was our family narrative neatly bisected into two distinct eras: Before Autism and After. Before Autism, my hazy impression of [special needs parents](#) was that they were a rare breed of human, noble souls preternaturally gifted with patience and oozing with otherworldly enlightenment.

That's why God picked them. Ordinary persons were not worthy of so lofty a calling.

That is, until God picked me, a spectacularly less than average woman. Impatient and shrill, I once got so fed up at my child eating with his hands that I wrapped his fingers around a fork and sealed it into a fist with tape. Alarmed, my husband intervened and released our son before Child Protective Services found out.

Well-intended friends must have shared the same uninformed understanding because they attempted to encourage with, “It takes a special person to raise a special needs child.” Only I didn't volunteer for this—I had been drafted. The likes of me would never sign up for such a gig, much less qualify. Perhaps that was the point. God was surely playing some cosmic joke with this epic mismatch of child to parent. It seemed a cruel irony to pair a vulnerable, delicate child with a reckless mother like me. I wasn't comfortable around disabled people. I avoided making eye contact. I'm irresponsible and lack empathy. I'm shallow, self-centered, and lazy. “You've got the wrong person,” I thought. “Lord, please pick someone else.”

It was as if God intentionally chose someone like me to demonstrate that he is God, and I am not. But I wasn't the first ordinary person in history to balk at an extraordinary calling.

In Exodus 4, Moses faced a daunting task. Here was a man in midlife, who'd spent the last 40 years in obscurity, tending to livestock. The desert of domesticity afforded plenty of alone time to ruminate over past mistakes. Then suddenly, the Lord thrust him toward the courts of Pharaoh

to challenge the highest power in the land and extract his labor force out from under his nose. Moses protested multiple times: I'm not qualified.

God agreed. But rather than boosting Moses' self-confidence by highlighting his princely upbringing or educational credentials of yesteryear, God simply reminded him, "I AM who I AM" (Ex. 3:14). He is God, and by deduction, Moses was not. The Lord was fully aware that Moses would require supernatural intervention and that his presence and power would be Moses' sole asset in accomplishing the oversized assignment. The only thing required of Moses: obedience.

The same holds true for special needs parents. Does it require a special person to raise a child with special needs? No. It only requires a humble faith in an extraordinary God. In his sovereignty, God saw fit to assign our unique child to us. Personalized gifts are ineligible for return or exchange. There is no margin for, "Please, pick someone else!"

In *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby writes, "God can do anything He pleases through an ordinary person who is fully dedicated to Him." Rather than fixate on our perceived lack, we need to fix our eyes on the One who specializes in making the impossible possible.

Who gave us our mouths, the gifts of speech, and sight? Was it not the Lord? Who created each of our children, fearfully and wonderfully made? Who decided on this divine pairing of child to parent and knit them unto us? Is it not the Lord? He will enable us to speak, to advocate, and to raise this child. He will bless and make this child a blessing.

The God of Moses calls us to the "impossible" task of special needs parenting so that we may demonstrate his greater power that is at work within us. In spite of our glaring inadequacy and lack, God will do what only a supernatural God can do. He is God. We are not. It is his responsibility to assign, transform, provide, and deliver.

Faithfulness is our job. Fruitfulness is his.

Diane is a special needs ministry consultant, speaker, and author who recently released her latest book, [Unbroken Faith: Spiritual Recovery for the Special Needs Parent](#). Connect with her at dianedokkokim.com.

This adapted excerpt was taken from *Unbroken Faith* © 2017 by Diane Dokko Kim. Used with permission by Worthy Books, an imprint of [Worthy Publishing Group](#), a division of Worthy Media Inc. All rights reserved.