

FATHER OF AUTISTIC TEEN WITH DEMONS

“I can’t find Luke. He is my special friend. He lives in my room. He is like an angel. He says that God is not love. He tells me bad things. He loves me when I am bad. He tells me to do bad things.” These shocking words were typed by my 16 year-old autistic son, Daniel.

Daniel was born in June of 1975, and as proud parents we brought him home from the hospital feeling that we had a “perfect” child. However, by six months we suspected that Daniel was not normal. His development was slow, he cried often and would refuse to be comforted. He developed some speech in his early years, but by age four, he had lost the ability to talk. Two medical specialists told us that Daniel was suffering from atrophy of the brain and that he would die. However, after a forty day stay in the hospital, Daniel was diagnosed as being a “classic autistic”. The hospital psychiatrist told us that along with being autistic, our son was mentally retarded and that his future was hopeless. We were counseled to place him into an institution and to “get on with our lives.” This counsel was music to our ears.

Daniel’s behavior at this time was almost unbearable. He would only sleep a few hours each night. He would daily spread feces on his bedroom walls. Daniel was breaking windows in the house and pulling the hair out of his younger sisters. With the exception of one older lady in the church, no one ever offered to help us in any way. We were all totally exhausted.

On Daniel’s fifth birthday we placed him in a residential treatment center for autistic children. I remember driving away from the center. My wife and I were both weeping, but we had counseled with several pastors and Christian leaders, and all had assured us that we were doing the “will of God”. However, we also felt a sense of relief, like a huge burden had been lifted from our shoulders. Life became much easier for us. My wife no longer lived in a state of exhaustion, but now she began to enjoy life.

Our two young daughters were no longer fearful, and my oldest daughter stopped stuttering. Best of all, well-meaning Christians stopped telling us that, “You must have committed some terrible sin to be punished like this.” With Daniel out of our life, I had more time to pursue my interests. During this time I finished my Doctor’s degree and poured my energies into becoming a “great” pastor. However, there was a nagging feeling that we were somehow missing God’s best.

Four years after Daniel was placed outside our home, we brought him back to live with us. We counseled with a wise Christian leader who told us that our all-knowing God had given us our son for His glory and that He would use Daniel in the process of molding us into the image of Christ. When Daniel was nine years old, we brought him home. Frankly, those who knew about Daniel thought we were crazy. Some were so bold as to tell us so. Our goal in bringing Daniel

home was that through the Scriptures being read and taught daily in our home, our son might become mighty in spirit.

We believed that Daniel was profoundly retarded with an I.Q. of 36. Being autistic, Daniel was not able to communicate by facial expression, shaking or nodding his head, or the movements of his hands.

The only reason we could think of for bringing him home was simple obedience to God. When we brought Daniel home, he continued with the same behavior as before. All of his destructive habits were there. Daniel would try to bit the other children. In a seeming fit of rage, he would pound on the walls and destroy things. My wife and I prayed over him daily, we read the Scriptures to him, and we disciplined him according to the teachings of the Bible. In time, his behavior became manageable, and we resigned ourselves to living with an autistic son who was profoundly retarded and without hope for any change. Daniel's strange noises, hand flapping, and occasional upsets made for a tense home situation. His brother and sisters would always need to be aware of what Daniel was doing and to remember to stay out of his way.

Many nights I would weep over the thought of what Daniel could have been. Often, without faith, I would pray for God to perform a miracle in Daniel's life. However, a miracle was out of the realm of possibility in my thinking. I believed that God in His wise sovereignty had given me a son, greatly handicapped, for the purpose of teaching me compassion for others, and perhaps this was the price of being trusted with ministry.

Our home was certainly not "normal", but my wife and I learned to cope on a day by day basis believing that our wise heavenly Father was in control. It was beyond the realm of our wildest dreams as to what would take place in our son's life. In February 1992, we were taught a technique called facilitated communication, where we could take Daniel's hand and provide a counterbalance, so that perhaps he could use the keyboard on our computer. My thoughts on the matter were, "This is absurd. How can a retarded child type anything? He would not know how to spell even if he were to have normal intelligence!" We had tried so many new ideas before. I had lost hope a long time ago. One day in February, to my wife's amazement, Daniel began to type. His first words to us were, "I found God. Jesus died on the cross for me. I accepted Christ as my Savior six years ago." Elizabeth immediately called my office, and I rushed home. The communication we had received was almost unbelievable. I took Daniel's hand and asked, "What did we have for dinner last night?" To my amazement he typed, "pizza". This opened a floodgate. Information began to pour out of Daniel. He told us that he had been so lonely when he was not able to communicate. He shared large passages of Scripture with us that he had memorized. He told us about books that he had read. He explained that he had learned to read by listening to my wife as she taught our younger children the phonetical system. Daniel shared that he was not angry or bitter with his lot in life. Many times he has affirmed his love for God

and people. He says that with all of his heart he desires to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the written word.

One evening during our family wisdom search, I decided to play a tape by Jim Logan. The tape was a message that he had given at a conference which we were unable to attend. Jim was sharing about demon activity in the lives of believers. After listening for about 15 minutes, I said to my wife, "Please throw that tape in the garbage; I don't believe a word of it. And I don't want this trash being taught in our home." The reason for my strong reaction is that I hold two advanced degrees from conservative seminaries and that I am a certified Biblical counselor. My theology left no room for any distinction between the world, the flesh, and the devil. I believed that if Satan had any power or influence in our lives, there was simply no way we could ever discern it. And besides all this, only religious kooks dabble in the demonic. The tape went to the garbage, and the case was closed. At least that's what I thought.

Sometimes later Daniel typed out, "I can't find Luke. He is my special friend. I met him when we lived in Madelia (a former pastorate). He told me to hit the girls. He told me to break things." Daniel went on to explain that Luke had followed him to the residential treatment center where he lived for about four years. Then Luke followed Daniel when he came home. Luke had lived with Daniel every place that we ever moved. Daniel shared that after he accepted Christ as Savior, he could command Luke to leave and that he would, for awhile, but Luke would always return. Daniel had formed a very close relationship with this "spirit guide".

In March of this year, I claimed Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony..." I asked God in the name of and through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ to cast Luke out of our home and to keep him away from my son, Daniel. Luke has not returned. Daniel typed these words, "I feel better now, Luke is gone, I know he is gone. I am glad I told you about him; I will tell you everything. I feel better now, I feel good, I feel clean. God is my friend. I don't need Luke."

During the time Luke was in our home, he would harass our young daughters. They would awaken at night, and would say they saw a face and glowing eyes in the dark. They would claim to feel an evil presence in their room. I would attribute this to their active imaginations or child type nightmares.

The question that I have been struggling with is how did Luke get into our home? We never owned a television, and our home was cleansed of any sensual materials. I was morally pure, and I kept a close guard on my thoughts. When Daniel was born, I was a seminary student, and I pastored on weekends. Although I loved Daniel, I also felt that he was an intrusion in our family. I now had to work a full-time job, and I was afraid that he would jeopardize my educational goals. I had placed my career as a pastor ahead of everything in life. What a fool I

was, not knowing the ways of God. I can honestly thank the Lord for my son and for the many truths the Lord has used him to teach me.