

# His PERFECT WILL

By Kris Shinn



## God reveals His plan through an autistic son

In April 2013, I drove to Children's Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas, and heard a doctor say words that ripped my heart out.

"Mr. Shinn, your son has moderate to severe

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autism. He may never be able to speak, and will most likely have to be put in an institution by the time he is 12."

What? My boy? My beautiful two-and-a-half-year-old son? A hearing problem, maybe. A muscle disorder, perhaps. But autism? Autism means never being normal. Autism means the whole father-son relationship—with camping trips, hikes in the woods, shoot-arounds with a basketball in the driveway—would never happen.

I sat in my car exactly where I had parked it earlier that morning and sobbed for two hours. My heart was breaking, my head reeling. I was so low I had to reach up to touch bottom. Where was the

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fairness of this? I had energy and a great career ahead of me; what was right about having to raise a severely autistic child as a single father?

"Why, Lord?" I sobbed.

"Why me?"

I wasn't praying, I was venting. I was angry, telling God just how I felt. I wanted Him to hear my bitter outburst and understand how devastated I felt. I let Him have it. My raging emotions rushed out like a flash flood into a dry riverbed.

And yes, God heard it all.

"Why not you?" was His reply when I finally regained control. "This really has nothing to do with

you, but everything to do with Me."

I didn't know what He meant then. I didn't know if He was promising to heal Will, or if He had given me a cross to bear for the rest of my life. I didn't know if I'd live to see a miracle; I didn't know if I'd live to see another sunrise.

But now, 13 years later, after more setbacks and breakouts than I can recount, I'm here to say that what the devil means for evil, God means for good. In your life, as well as in mine.

I had been a varsity athlete in college. I was disciplined, tough, strong, focused. Challenges brought out the best in me.

But this one brought me to my knees. It left me wounded and crippled. It was the "thing" I couldn't do for myself or by myself. It was too big and too heavy to carry alone, too complicated for my limited reasoning to figure out.

Yet nothing I had experienced before helped me see my need of God as clearly. And that, I think, was the point.

I had to learn to take everything to God. My emotions, first of all. But every decision, too. How did I know which course of action was best for my son?

So the mornings began with earnest, fervent, desperate prayer. Every step was bathed in prayer. Prayer for help. Prayer that God wouldn't leave me when life was so hard.

An autistic child needs attention and supervision virtually 24/7. I saw God come through for me in a big way there. Several friends and family

**Thank You, Lord, for the help You sent.**

members stepped up to make sure I didn't quit when I really wanted to. They kept tabs on me. They called and dropped by to see how I was getting along. They gave me some relief, taking me places to make sure I hadn't sunk into a hole of despair and couldn't get out.

Thank You, Lord, for the help You sent.

He sent a wife, too, an amazing woman named Brandi who loves me and loves my boy, and keeps us both sane and focused. You hit a home-run with Brandi, Lord.

Life happens step by step. Breath by breath. We took the days as they came and battled our way through them all. God changed the "burden" of an autistic child into "love" for a special needs son. I watched Will grow and learn and respond to a thousand gentle directions, and realized what a beautiful creation he was. I came to see that, through his weaknesses—and through mine—God was showing Himself strong.

Let me tell you what happened on Sunday, September 9, 2012. Will wasn't in an institution; he was sitting beside me at The Church Alive in Conway, Arkansas. We were loved there. The people knew Will's story.

During worship, Pastor Long suddenly stopped the music.

"Kris has been telling me about Will speaking," he told the congregation. The place



went wild with applause.

He then asked Will if he could say, "Jesus."

Will knew the pastor was talking to him. He got excited.

I grabbed his hand and took him to the front.

Will loves being up front.

Again Pastor Long asked him if he could say, "Jesus."

I asked for the microphone. "Will, can you say, 'Jesus'?" I asked.

"Jesus!" he said.

The place went crazy. Literally, it seemed forever before the noise died down.

Will was loving life, and I was a bucket of tears.

My son is 15 years old now, is living at home, and is talking. God has the last word, and He says all things work together for good.

As the story about Will has spread, doors have opened for me to share our experiences with a larger world. I speak in churches, to parent groups, in schools. I teach crisis management classes and behavior classes. I work one-on-one with teachers and students around the state and the region.

Because of Will, I am able to take the love of God to people who have lost hope.

I tell them God is bigger than any diagnosis, that God has a loving intention for every trial, that He never leaves us to carry our burden alone. One day we will see clearly, and the beauty of His purpose will overwhelm us.

Thank You, Lord, for Your perfect Will.



Kris Shinn is the author of *We Win: A Father's Journey through Autism*, published 2014 by XulonPress.