

# I Need You

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In my dream I am falling. Falling! ...and screaming for help. I am hanging over the edge and I can't pull myself back up! I am slipping! Doesn't anyone hear me? If only I could pull myself back up I would be okay; but I can't. I am falling and I am terrified!

We all have had a dream similar to this. This, however, to some is no dream. It is a recurring situation our daughter finds herself in. This is the result of a young girl with Cerebral Palsy who gets tangled in the sheets of her bed and rolls just a little too close to the edge of the bed and finds herself hanging off the edge in horrific fear of falling without the ability to pull herself up. Many a night I hear, "Mommy, I need you!" and she does.

From dressing to toileting, and eating to writing "I need you" can be heard throughout the day. Our daughter is not completely helpless; however, nearly every task requires some form of help and assistance. For example, while our daughter can use a spoon or fork she often struggles with getting the food onto the utensil; or, if she does get the food on she must deal with the disappointment of the food falling off just as it touches her lips. The CP (Cerebral Palsy) affects her coordination and with every meal she needs help. She makes improvements, but the reality remains...she needs help. Even play time is a task for her. If she drops the object she is playing with, she can't pick it up. Once again, she needs help.

That's because CP is a movement disorder caused by damage to motor control centers of the developing brain. Very basically, in our daughter's case this damage to the brain causes the brain to send too many messages to many muscles of her body so that certain muscles are constantly over-firing causing abnormal muscle tone. We like to say, "It's what makes her stiff" although spastic is the proper term. Her muscles are very tight and daily stretches and movements are important. While CP is not a degenerative disease, growth is not its friend as muscles that are already too "short" and tight will only become tighter with growth. There is no known cure, but certainly surgical and medicinal options exist. Interestingly, epilepsy, mental retardation, and learning disabilities are secondary conditions to CP and are not part of Cerebral Palsy. To understand CP more I refer the reader to Wikipedia. To put all this into perspective I want you to picture a young girl sitting on a stool at a birthday party. Her feet are flat on the floor...until her mom brings out the cake. The excitement causes her brain to send those messages and instantly her feet fly out! Straight out! And she nearly flies back off the seat except her Aunt catches her first. Okay, so she's settled down again and is sitting nicely. It's time for her to blow out her candles. She's excited but can't overcome it now. She's concentrating on something new. She wants to blow out her candles. All seven! But this is no easy task! She has been working on this in therapy. The coordination of her mouth muscles and lungs to blow out enough air is difficult. But she can do it! It will take much longer than "normal," but her family doesn't mind. This is only the second birthday they've seen her do it; and they love it!

What could possibly be the purpose of God in creating such a needy individual? Certainly it is, "...for I (God, *TDP*) have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isa. 43:7). And also, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). From Scripture we see that our daughter's CP and the help she gets from others is working for her salvation and thus

glorifying God. But what about you? What purpose could her condition have for you, young reader? Well, because she is in the covenant, she belongs to the fellowship of God's people and this means that she belongs in the fellowship-life where you belong, including the Christian day school. But, because of her handicaps, she needs you! She needs that helper in Sunday School who picks up her dropped folder. She needs the classmate to hold the Psalter for her while she stands in her walker to sing at school. She needs the two boys to wheel her desk to the gym. She needs that classmate to stop, say "hi," and ask how her day is going. She needs the junior-high kid to carry her special chair to the sanctuary so she can use it in the program. She needs her circle of friends to play with her at recess. She needs the teacher who opens the door for her. She needs the aide who adapts her school work for her. She needs the congregation who supports her financially in order that she might attend the Christian day school. She needs her parents and siblings to spiritually strengthen and encourage her. She needs the school board members who willingly adapt things to meet her needs. She needs the Protestant Reformed Special Education Board and its society to help in the support of her educational needs. Wow! The needs just don't seem to end. But wait...there's more to see.

That child on the playground just selflessly gave up his turn in kickball so she could come in for a turn. He didn't even care that he now has to run slowly behind her in order to get home. And that kid over there has asked the teacher's aide all week when it will be his turn to play with her next, even though all the other kids may be playing his favorite game without him. That young lady over there just came and asked the aide if there was anything she could do to help. Oh, and look over there! There is a middle-aged man crying in the pew as she sings her heart out with the whole school in the program. At home her siblings willingly give up a day of hiking in the mountains to do something she can do with them. Her father and mother have a far better understanding of what a privilege it is to have each and every one of their children in our Christian day school.

Dear reader, can you think of a special needs person within your life? There are so many. From the Autistic boy, to the hearing impaired girl, to the elderly man who had a stroke...your special needs brother or sister is there. Do you make a point of saying "hi"? Parents, when your child asks you why that person is in a wheelchair (right in front of that person) do you hush them up and lead them away because of your discomfort? We have personally seen that children are more comfortable (although certainly curious) regarding the handicaps of the handicapped than the parents. Reader, do you have any opportunities in your church or community to help someone more needy? Do you mention them in your prayers? If not, then this article is for you! For all the needs of any special needs child or adult, one purpose may be for you to be the one to realize and say to your special needs acquaintance... "It is I who needs you."

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