Perspective Changes Everything

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Introduction

Hi!

Thanks for downloading my ebook! I hope you are being blessed by this fall's Homeschool Summit. I'm Lucille Stekl and my blog is Life Well Inspired. Way back in 2012, God put the idea for the blog on my heart and I began to understand why I always loved writing. So, humbled by His request, I began blogging out of obedience. I had no idea how much I would grow as a person by sharing what I was learning through reading and studying God's word. It has been an incredible experience and one that has changed me.

One of the biggest catalysts of change in my life was having a child diagnosed with auditory processing disorder. Early on we had him in school but brought him home and began homeschooling when he was in 3rd grade. Both the years in school and then the years at home have been challenging.

Homeschooling family relationships are wonderful but they can also be incredibly difficult. I'm sharing some of my story here and it is my prayer that God uses this ebook to encourage other families traveling a similar road.

Thanks for downloading! Enjoy!

Inspired by Him,

Lucille

Chapter 1
Ideals Gone Wrong

We all have an ideal vision in our heads of what homeschooling life and family should be. Maybe it's the perfect schoolroom set up or how cooperative our children should be. Maybe it's how smooth our days should flow. Whatever it is, we all have something in our heads that we measure our days and lives against. More often than not, we don't reach that expectation. All too often, we face struggle after struggle and obstacle after obstacle. Can you relate?

My husband and I knew we wanted to homeschool our children before we met each other and decided to get married. So, when our first little guy was born we expected to be on our homeschooling journey. But while we had a straight line on the map, God had other plans that included quite a lot of twists and turns. We weren't able to get started on our homeschooling journey until he was going into 3rd grade.

About 18 months into our parenting journey, my oldest son flipped a switch, so to speak, and became increasingly full of temper tantrums. His speech became more and more delayed which made the behavioral problems more intense. We ended up having to put him in KidStart, a preschool program for struggling preschool learners and developers, when he was 3. To make matters worse, we had to put him in Kindergarten at age 4 because the state wouldn't pay for another year in the KidStart preschool program since he would be 5 before the legal cut off date.

What a nightmare those early years were. I had an almost non-verbal preschooler who screamed as I buckled him in the bus to go to preschool and then who tantrumed most of the time he was home. He would take off on me when we went grocery shopping and didn't do much, if any, cooperating. First we received the diagnosis of severe speech problems, then fine motor delays, anxiety, ADHD, and finally Auditory Processing Disorder. I couldn't get him to sleep easily and bedtimes would sometimes take up to 2 hours.

To make matters worse, my husband worked long days with a mandatory 6 day work week. Family relationships were strained, to say the least. But by God's grace,

we pulled through the worst of that and I can say that God has held us and still guides us each step of the way. Part of that guidance came through staying in the Word and in prayer.

When times are tough and crazy, deep Bible study times aren't always an option and long prayer times seem unattainable. But what I found is that I could keep the radio on a Christian station. I could read a short devotional at some point in my day and I discovered that breath prayers are life savers. Some people play the Bible on tape as a way to get a little of God's word into their minds for the day. The Lord will meet you however it is you can get to Him. He promises to draw near to us when we draw near to Him.

If you find yourself in a similar kind of situation, I would like to encourage you to lean all the more into the Lord and follow His lead. Draw as close to God as you can. I can't tell you how many times I would pray for direction or how to discipline something and He would bring a scripture to mind. Sometimes I would see an article on Facebook or one of the devotionals in my inbox would be just the thing I needed. If you have experienced that kind of thing you know how amazing it is and if you haven't yet, you are in for a real treat!

Each step of the way so far God has brought the necessary information to me. Sometimes it was diet related. Other times it was character development. Once in a while it was a conviction for me correcting a bad attitude I was harboring. I just acted upon what He brought to me. I hope as I move through my story, God will bring ideas to help you on your journey if you happen to be on a difficult road.

My husband and I have always joked that things are a multifaceted puzzle. There was sleep, diet, sensory, communication, character, personality, and siblings to name a few. All were legitimate factors into how rough or smooth the day/week would go. My intention is to provide some practical tips and scriptures to encourage you.

Chapter 2
Love and Compassion

These two characteristics do not come naturally to human beings. I dare say they definitely do not come easy to the mom of a difficult child or the wife in a difficult marriage relationship. If you find yourself in a place where you're not feeling much love and compassion toward your family, I can totally empathize with you. In the beginning, before I understood what was going on, I was angry. Angry with my child for not responding to my correction and annoyed with my husband who I assumed thought it was my fault.

Little by little, God began showing me little pieces of the puzzle and each time He would reveal something I would gain a little more understanding. Each time I learned why a certain behavior was happening, I gained a little more compassion and a little of the anger faded away.

I would encourage you to focus in on the relationships in your family and observe what's really going on. So many behaviors that happen are not what they seem. Sometimes defiance is the child communicating that they are afraid of failing. Uncooperation can be caused by a discomfort from something. Anger can surface when they are feeling incompetent. Meanness to siblings can happen because they are feeling an injustice somehow.

Early on, I fell for the lie that kids are just being difficult to be difficult and that they simply needed more discipline and training. But when you get down on their level and really flesh out what's going on, it will break your heart. That's the place where you will be able to find solutions. If you can't find the solution, it will at least give you some compassion that will help you love them in their difficult place until a solution can be found.

God has brought the love passage in I Corinthians 13 to me so many times, reminding me that love keeps no record of wrongs. I have been convicted over and over not to discipline more intensely when the same infractions keep happening. In parenting, love keeping no record of wrongs means that each infraction gets

disciplined as if it was the first infraction. That, my friends, is NOT easy to do! In marriage, it means not holding grudges. We have to fight against getting more and more angry each time the rules are broken or we feel wronged and slighted.

This is something that I have found comes more easily as you grow closer to the Lord. Being able to love in such a way that you don't keep a record of wrong is a sign that you are maturing in your faith. This is a mark of Christ's work in a person's life and often happens without much effort.

Compassion and love usually come because of a perspective shift. It's amazing what a shift in our perspective can do for our outlook and mood, isn't it? Sometimes it's something as small as learning what a word in Greek actually means when studying the Bible. Other times it's something that happens during the course of our day that completely changes the way we think.

When we gain some insight into the real reason behind the behaviors of our kids, our perspective changes. Realizing the intense stress or workload of our spouse changes our perspective and consequently, our feelings. Illness of a family member changes our perspective and causes us to see things differently.

Usually, these perspective shifts are a positive thing. They change us for the better. Good begins to come from the difficulty and the pain. We grow closer to the Lord as we lean on Him to give us strength. We grow in wisdom as we adapt to the situation we find ourselves in. And we have lots of opportunity to give God the glory and share what God has done for us.

Bedtime in my home was close to torturous. After a hard day of parenting and feeling quite exhausted myself, spending 2 hours trying to get my oldest son to sleep would almost send me over the edge. At the time, we thought we were dealing with ADHD. The counselor we were working with explained that for kids with ADHD, calming down produces feelings of panic rather than relaxation. That's why just as they started to settle down, the kids with ADHD will rev themselves up again. Bedtime was still hard, but instead of seeing the behavior as defiant and disobedient, I could empathize with what he was feeling. Truly, perspective changes everything!

Chapter 3
God's Sovereignty

God's sovereignty is something that has sustained me all my life. But especially in motherhood and in my role as a wife I have had to trust God's sovereign plan. I will never forget one MOPS meeting when the speaker told the group that God had specifically given our children to us and that we were the absolute best person to raise our kids. We had everything we needed to parent them right down to our personality and our likes and dislikes. She was so right. I knew that, but that day it sunk in and shifted my perspective. She played a song with her presentation and every time I hear that song now I am reminded of that message. I experiences God's goodness that day! He gave me a message I desperately needed and then a memory peg that would make that message minister to me again and again over the years.

Over and over again, I came face to face with God's sovereignty in one way or another. Each time it would give me the courage to go on. Many times I leaned hard into the fact that no matter what I faced as a wife and mother, God wasn't surprised by the circumstances. He already knew the outcome and how it would eventually bring Him glory.

God sits on His throne above and beyond our world and our time here on earth. He knows the past, the present and the future. He has known each of us from before we were born. He knows every word we say before we say it. He knows every action before we act and He knows how it will glorify Him in the end. He controls the good and the bad, using both for His purposes. I don't know about you, but that brings me incredible comfort.

When I get scared that my oldest isn't going to grasp the math or catch up to the appropriate grade level, I remember that God will equip him for the purposes He created him for. I can take a deep breath and just teach the next lesson. My job is to seek the Lord for the next step and what He wants me to do with him.

When things just don't seem fair, I remember that God will use these hard times in my life to bring me closer to Him. If nothing else, He will use it to grow my faith. I'm

then able to overlook the little things that would normally offend me.

Focusing on God's sovereignty allows me to live my life less worried and less offended by others actions. Understanding God's sovereignty is definitely a game changer in handling family relationships!

Over time, I've noticed another beautiful aspect of God's sovereignty. There are some passages of scripture that show a third side to the story. When you read the book of Job, it is clear that there is another side of the story that's not revealed to those going through it. Job and his family/ friends had no idea of the conversations between the devil and the Lord. They had no way of knowing that Job's trials were God testing him and proving Satan wrong. Satan, after all, had challenged the Lord saying that Job wasn't as devoted to the Lord as God thought because God had blessed him so much.

In the same way, we can look at the story of Joseph and even though we don't have recorded conversations from God, we can see that there was a third side to that story as well. All that Joseph went through- being sold into slavery by his brothers and then put into prison unjustly- was for the purpose of saving people in many countries from the great famine.

Over and over in scripture we see God's sovereign hand working behind the scenes for His people. So take heart! Those trials, difficult times, and tricky relationships can and will be used by God. Just like Job and Joseph had no idea what God was up to, we can't see the third side to our story, either. But we can live our lives courageously because of the stories in the Bible that clue us in to the other third sides. We can live courageously trusting God to do for us what he has done for the other people in history.

A third piece of God's sovereignty that I leaned on heavily is that nothing surprises God. Even the worst that happens to us He already knew it was going to happen. Even better, He already knows the outcome. We don't need to carry the worry around but rather we can thank Him for how he will resolve the problem and then be faithful to do what he guides us to do.

To be honest, God's sovereignty is my secret to coping with and handling the hard stuff. Knowing He is in complete control, seeing it played out in scripture and watching it unfold in my life has been one of my greatest treasures. I hope that brings a perspective shift to you as well.

Chapter 4
Rest and Renewal

Muscling through and dealing with trials, troubles and difficult relationships is exhausting. It zapps us of mental energy, physical strength and the ability to rest. I remember people asking me what they could do to help me and others telling me I needed to take some time to recharge. But the only thing that I felt would help was for my son to change and the hardship to go away. So I plowed through, reading and researching in the directions I was led, implementing what I felt was necessary. The demands of a difficult child will wreck you. Any difficult relationship or circumstance will wreck you, if you are trying to do it in your own strength.

There's a good reason why the Bible tells us to cast your cares on the Lord and that the Lord's burden is light. There's a good reason why we are called to a Sabbath day and why King David gave the Lord the early part of his day.

Our bodies were created to need rest. When we sleep our bodies detox, or take out the garbage. That also when cell repair happens. In order to function properly, we need to weave adequate sleep and rest routines into our days, weeks, months and years.

I can tell you that after years and years of pushing through, pulling myself along, and being busy for almost 7 days a week my body crashed. My brain had been constantly thinking and analyzing while my body was in constant motion and it just couldn't go any more. I found myself in the grasp of anxiety with a depleted gut microbiome, thin hair, low energy and motivation but with 4 kiddos, a hubby and a house to take care of. (You can read my anxiety story and more about my road to healing over on my blog). For 3 years I felt far away from God but I trusted he was still there and so I kept leaning into Him.

Somewhere I saw a quote about how the teacher is always quiet during the test and I realized that maybe that what was happening to me. Maybe that's why God seems so far away. He wasn't, of course. About 3 years before I had experienced a faith-building time of personal bible study in the book of Genesis. It was amazing to see the hand of God throughout history and how the men and women were changed

by what God brought them through. And then I had 2 babies before I started sensing God close by again.

As I reflect back on those years, I can see now that the one thing missing was times of rest. I was striving so hard to find God again, heal myself, and deal with my kids- especially my oldest. I was just beginning our homeschooling journey and trying to keep up with everything else that comes with being a mother and a wife. I forgot about myself and neglected to rest. Sundays became a catch-up day. And you know what? God didn't bless that.

You know what else? God didn't give up on me. He gently began bringing information and verses about Sunday and Sabbath rest to me. Verses, stories, and testimonies began to leave an impression in my mind. And slowly I have been listening. It's hard, for sure, but I now rest as much as possible. Taking my cues from the Israelites, I try to prep meals on Saturday and pay attention to the laundry so that I don't need to do any on Sunday. And as I have done those things, God has also shown me the way to heal my body and restore my health. To God be the Glory for that but it began with my obedience.

This is not something that will be mastered, but will rather be an ongoing intentional weekly goal. You see, the devil wants nothing more than to bring chaos and exhaustion into our lives. It makes us less of a witness for the Lord and prevents us from living out God's plan for our lives. This is spiritual warfare. God has already won the battle but we still need to be on guard against the devil who Peter tells us is a lion seeking to devour. (I Peter)

One resource God used to pull me into a rythym of Sabbath rest is a weekly email from Shelly Miller called the Sabbath Society. She sends out weekly emails on Fridays and it's a gentle reminder to prepare for Sunday. You might find her email encouraging and helpful too!

Another practical tip is to spend some time planning you week and meals. Looking ahead to the week and getting a plan in place, either detailed or loose, helps to keep Sunday from sneaking up on you. This is a fairly new practice I'm trying to implement into my life but so far I am seeing some positive results. It really boils down to being intentional with how you're living your life. Developing the skill of being the boss of your time allows you to live your life on the offense and being able to call the

shots. The alternative is living on the defence, caught in the cycle of responding to the events of the day and what life throws at you.

Being intentional with times of rest and living life on the offense will make a world of difference for you. You will find you have more energy to look objectively at problems and more able to find solutions. You will have more patience in dealing with the difficult people and circumstances in your life. Setting new habits and routines can be tough, but setting new routines of rest and renewal will serve you well!

Chapter 5
The Physical Body

Aside from the spiritual aspects, understanding the physical needs of our human body is equally as important. This is especially important when dealing with children. It was through the course of many years with my son that I came to understand the different facets of human needs.

Early on we quickly discovered how important sleep and nutrition was to our son. We also learned the importance of the different developmental stages because his didn't develop in the usual way. Our journey took me into learning about neurotransmitters and the brain, our sensory system and its proper development. All these things play a huge part in character, temperament, and personality. I bet as you begin to study your child or the person you are having trouble with, these pieces will become clear to you as well.

Early on, about 7 months into parenthood, I learned the importance of sleep for babies. A friend of mine put her kiddos to bed super early and shared a book with me. Low and behold, a few months later, my son started getting fussy and more sleep was the remedy. The book was Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child by Marc Weisbluth. Babies and kids need a lot of sleep and favor earlier bedtimes which enable closer to 12 hours overnight. The big takeaway for me is that sleep begets sleep, meaning that a well rested child will sleep longer. Overtired children will wake up in the night. This has proved true with all four of my kids, although each one has had different sleep requirements, wake up times and bedtimes.

A lack of sleep messes with our bodies and that can be a culprit when there's cognitive problems, irritability, and plain old miserableness. Just as it's important for us to make sure we are clocking enough sleep hours, it's even more important for kids to get enough sleep. Their bodies are trying to detox and clean out on top of growing. A well rested person will be happier, more content, able to learn, and generally in a good mood.

Another huge piece to our puzzle was diet and nutrition. We went around the

block with this one for years. Some people find that this is their answer and by removing certain foods they eliminate the problem. We found that food was a coping method for us. When he ate something that he was sensitive to, the problem behaviors were magnified. It's totally worth trying it out, though. For my son, all his responses were more mental. We would see anger and aggression along with more ADHD type symptoms. And for us, it was like clockwork with the reaction showing up 3 days after he ate something.

First we did the elimination diet, which is a great place to start. You just remove all dairy, eggs and wheat from the diet for 14 days and then add one back in at a time and see what reactions show up. If nothing happens add the next one back in and watch for a reaction then add the last one in. Those are the biggest, most typical culprits and it's good to get those out of the way first.

Diet can be all consuming and tricky. Our experience was that we would need to avoid something for a while and then the food would go back in. I think for a few years the question during the holidays was what were we avoiding this year, with the proverbial eye roll.

Another common allergen that can cause problems is white sugar. You can use honey, maple syrup or sugar, stevia, molasses, or xylitol but stay away from regular sugar for a while. This means you will have to read labels. Don't just look for a sugar-free label though because you don't want the chemical sweeteners like aspartame, Splenda or those kinds of low-calorie sweeteners, either. The goal is natural real-food sweeteners. If sugar is the problem or part of the problem, you will see the symptoms reduce over the course of a few days and then flare up the next time sugar is consumed.

Beyond the sugar, wheat, dairy, and eggs there are a few other avenues to try to discover problematic foods. One is the red dyes which is associated with ADHD symptoms and aggression among other things. There is also yellow dye and preservatives along with natural food components that can trigger reactions if the dye is causing a problem. This group of potentially problematic foods is called salicylates. Check out the Feingold Association for more information about that. We did that for a little while and found apples, grapes and oranges would trigger him. When we

eventually went gluten free I noticed those foods went back into his diet. What I loved about the Feingold Association is that they publish a food list with foods that pass their test. I found freedom in knowing which box of crackers or brand of snacks were as good as homemade.

God also led us to a chiropractor that specialized in children and development. She discovered that he had 4 of the 6 primal reflexes that normally go away on their own as normal development happens. So the development that should have been progressing had stopped. Through adjustments and exercises, that was addressed and we began to see progress.

This piece of the puzzle was the most exhausting. But I was desperate to find relief from the tantrums, anger, and chaos that was a daily problem in our home. If you are there, you know that desperate times call for desperate measures! Please know that all the work you put in to seeking help and finding solutions will be worth it in the end. If you are looking to God first and following His lead, you will find the strength to persevere.

Chapter 6
That's a Wrap

I tell you all this to give you hope. If you are dealing with behavioral problems in one of your children, there are many ways to help and options that aren't mainstream. Seek the Lord for wisdom and He will show you the way. You will be amazed to see what professionals and information He reveals. Your journey will be different than mine but it will be just as healing.

Each piece that the Lord shows you will be another puzzle piece and a step toward healing. Some days will still seem unbearable and you will wonder if you can hang on. A popular quote says that God will not give you more than you can handle. The rest of it that isn't as widely known is that God will not give you more than you can handle with His help.

That's the key, friend. After all these years of trial and struggle, I have come to realize that without the struggles, we wouldn't need God. Lord-willing, I am past the worst of this particular battle and I can tell you that I am not the same person. I am closer to the Lord and my character has changed. God used those trials and brought about those changes in me.

Many years ago, when we first started homeschooling, God gave me a few verses that I want to share as I close this book.

The threshing floors shall be full of grain;
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
I will restore to you the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent among you.
You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame."
Joel 2: 24-26

This is only a season. God will turn your winter into spring, even if it's years from now. He will redeem all the hardship that you have gone through.

Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
The wild beasts will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches,
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,"
Isaiah 43: 18-20

Even through the hardest time, God is working. He is doing a new thing. Circumstances will change for the better and you will too.

"If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.
And the Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,

like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail."
Isaiah 58:9a-11

God will guide you through the hard times and sustain you as you pour yourself out for you kids and your family. He will be with you through it all.

"But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king. Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the Lord will do before your eyes."
Samuel 12:15-16

God is sovereign. This is His battle. We need to stop striving, just be still, and let God fight for us.

I know that the Lord has a purpose for me and what I have been through. Nothing we go through is for nothing. God uses it all! It is my prayer that you have been encouraged in your journey.

"Many times I leaned hard into the fact that no matter what I faced as a wife and mother, God wasn't surprised by the circumstances. He already knew the outcome and how it would eventually bring Him glory."

Author Bio

Lucille Stekl lives in Western New York with her husband Brian and their 4 kids who range from 1-12 years old. Raised in a conservative Christian home, she cherishes studying scripture and growing in her faith. She has been blogging at lifewellinspired.com since 2012 and enjoys sharing what she learns from her personal bible study time and encouraging other women to grow in the Lord. You can find her homeschooling her kids, gardening, or tackling a home project.