



If you have children, you remember the times. You know, the ones when they were little and everything was fun? Every experience was new. Snowflakes, raindrops, blanket forts, you know, milestones. The first time they took a step, when they started eating food for real, the first day of school, and birthday parties. These were good times.

When Brynna was born we weren't sure about any of these things. Would she even live to see these milestones, to have all these experiences? Who knew. Life with Brynna is hard for sure. She is 7 now.

She has never run through the park, or really run at all. She doesn't speak to us with words, but, like Dory, speaks fluent whale. She doesn't really eat anything by mouth, except French fries, Doritos, and Cheddar Popcorn. Her med list looks like CVS exploded and she pokes me in my eye when I'm not paying attention. Sometimes we wake up to poop-ocalypse early in the morning.

However, for all the hardship and all the struggles, every single day seems like another milestone. Another chance to celebrate God's goodness, mercy, and provision. She is 7 now.

Last May, she began attending a special school near our home. A school built for kids like her. She is 7 now, and last week she used the potty. (I still use the word potty because my wife teaches 3 and 4 year olds. It's part of our vocabulary). She used the potty for the FIRST TIME! We were elated. Remember, she is 7 now.

She is 7 now and about a month ago she proved to us at parent's day she could now match things; bowl to bowl, cup to cup. Every. Single. Time.

She is 7 now and is finally walking unassisted, most of the time.

She is 7 now and asks for popcorn using an iPad that has pictures on it.



She is 7 now and still sleeps like an infant, bottom hiked in the air and covers all over the place.

She is 7 now and cuddles with me every morning when I wake her up. She loves hugs, too.

She is 7 now and plays with her See 'N Say for hours. Surely they can make these things silent, right?

For all the hardship and all the stress, we are privy to some unforeseen joy. We have set our shoulders for a lifetime of caring for an adult child...a real adult child. Not a child who has become an adult, but an adult-sized child. That's different.

The unforeseen joy is this: when she is 25, who knows what advances she will have made? Who knows what she will be able to do? It is likely we will be blessed to have an adult child who still marvels at the Fresh Beat Band, who loves reruns of Blues Clues, who wants hugs every morning, who loves to spin in circles outside in the sun, and who continues to achieve milestones other people stop celebrating after a few years.

It will be hard, but will also be joyful.

She is 7 now and the good news is she may be 7 forever. God is good.



Matt Parker

Hello! My name is Matt Parker. My wife, Tammy, and I are parents to 4



biological children, 3 adopted children, and foster one more. We are parents to a beautiful 11 year old with Septo-Optic Dysplasia. Since her birth, I have chronicled her life in my blog and a short book, *The Crucible's Fire*. My wife and I are both teachers, she in Special Education and I in Theatre and Business. I recently completed my M.Ed in Educational Leadership. I've also been a pastor for over 20 years in the lovely state of Texas.