

2005 HS Scholarship Winner

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When you think things couldn't get worse, have you ever thought to yourself, "Why me?" When things aren't going your way, I learned that giving up is not the answer. After all, things could be a lot worse. I have come to the realization that everything that is happening to me is part of God's plan for my life.

Ever since I was very young, I had a keen interest in science. I always strived to get the best grade I could, was in a gifted and talented program, and always had straight A's. I was called "the brain" in a family with a history of learning disabilities. My mom would jokingly say, "Can you believe he wants to be a scientist? One of our kids!"

My prolonged and continuing battle with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome began when I discovered that I had been infected with mononucleosis from someone who sat next to me in class. After struggling with this infection for the rest of the school year, I was sure that the symptoms would wear off and I would soon be back to normal. Unfortunately, things just got worse.

I felt tired, so tired that words can barely scratch the surface of what seemed like a bottomless chasm of grief and despair. Mornings have become a tiresome fight with my mom shaking me and yelling to wake me up; no alarm clock is loud enough to wake me. I wake up with intense muscle and joint pain all over my body. At times, I felt like I just wanted to be left alone. My whole day was living on autopilot; being dazed and confused in the "mental fogginess" that those with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome know all too well. I became forgetful, distracted, and disorganized; friends nicknamed me the absent-minded professor. After all, how can you think clearly when you're half asleep? I am struck with headaches that seemed to last for days like a painful reminder of an overwhelming fatigue that would haunt me all day long. At last, when I got home, I thought I would finally find peace in sleep. But, no matter how much sleep, I feel the same the next day. Each day is part of an endless cycle of desperation.

I had went through so many tests, got stuck with needles so many times I felt like a pin cushion, and yet they couldn't find out what was wrong. I went through tests from Lyme disease to an underactive thyroid gland, but all the tests came back negative. After ruling all of those diseases, I found out that all my symptoms matched those of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

I struggled to keep my grades; I was exhausted during school and slept right through the rest of the day at home. My teachers would wonder why I had trouble finishing homework; I had trouble figuring out when I would be awake enough to do anything.

I soon fell behind, which is hard to recover from when you're taking Advanced Placement classes. I had reached my ultimate emotional low when one of my teachers thought that I wouldn't pass the class and that I would have trouble making it into the college of my choice. It appeared that all my dreams were being shattered. With my slipping grades, my class rank fell to around 16%. My childhood dream of being a scientist seemed to be slipping out of reach.



Still, "The Lord is my strength and my song" and I still had trust in God that everything would be all right even when everything isn't all right. By knowing that God has a plan for me, I can hope even in the worst of times. After reading the book of Job, I realized that things could be worse. Job was a man who had everything one could want in life: wealth, good health, friends, and a great family. As time went by he lost all of these, but he kept his faith in God. In the end, "The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning." The adversity of his life serves as a testament of his faith for countless generations.

Even though I felt so terrible, I never let it get the best of me; as persistent as CFS is, so am I. I always manage to break into a smile, and make others happy; that's one of my aspirations in life that keeps me going. After my dad became disabled from complications with Diabetes, my mom had to become the breadwinner of the family with her children's entertainment company. I always help out and work as a clown and balloon artist in the business. My greatest reward is to see the smiles on the children's faces. I started and headed the "Undies for the Needy" underwear drive for the homeless and the Crisis Pregnancy Center. My family and I also donate our time with in "Buddy Ball" for the handicapped children for the past four years. This year, we received a plaque for our years of outstanding dedicated service and support to the Buddy Ball League.

I try to stay involved in extracurricular activities at school. I was inducted into the National Honor Society in my Junior year, and I am involved in Student Council and the Science Club. Not only did I manage to get through my AP classes, I also got a perfect score in the AP Biology Exam with my name on a plaque in front of our school. As for the teacher that said I wouldn't make it, I managed to bring my grade up to a B+ this last marking period. Now, I'm busy studying for this year's AP exams and hoping for another perfect score.

I am a senior at Oakcrest High School, and I am currently enrolled in Rowan University for the fall semester and plan to major in chemical engineering. I plan to get my master's degree and further my education all the way to the doctorate level. My ultimate goal is to be in a career that allows me to use my skills for the benefit of others.

So, having Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has affected my goal for higher education; it has made me stronger and encouraged me to pursue a growing scientific field of study that could benefit others like me. It has pushed me to go further; to discover, create, and use the gifts that God gave me to help cure such debilitating diseases that others suffer. As it is written in Job 8:21, "He will yet fill your mouth with laughing, and your lips with rejoicing." God has a plan for all of us. At last I am beginning to understand his plan for me; everything is meant for a reason. Because of all of this, I have learned to see peace and happiness in the mists of uncertainty and adversity, while helping others do the same.