

This is a plea for your prayers for our dear Marissa.

*"Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4*

Through the years, God has worked to bring together our wonderfully blended family. We have been blessed through the prayers and encouragement of so many people like you who have come alongside us to serve God in Honduras.

Marissa has been a joyful yet challenging part of this journey. She was given to us in a very precarious physical condition. Yet, God gave her strength and health through our care and she has grown from those initial 3 pounds 9 ounces to a ?? pound 16-year-old. You shouldn't ask or tell a lady's weight.

As a baby, she was late hitting all of her developmental milestones which was not out of the ordinary for her presumed degree of prematurity. But her language ability was severely delayed. It wasn't until we got a definitive diagnosis of her deafness that we began to understand why. Then providentially, shortly after we discovered her deafness, God provided for her hearing aids through members of the SERTOMA Club of North Augusta who we met while waiting for a delayed flight in Atlanta.

And of course there were the years of waiting and frustration for the adoption process.

Besides those physical and legal challenges, God has filled Marissa with his strength through many emotional challenges. She was separated from her birth mother, and while she never knew her birth mother we have been told that that separation does affect her in some way. Additionally, as a child she watched her second mother struggle for three years through breast cancer and pass away. Then a few months later, one of her uncles would also succumb to cancer.



Marissa's hearing aid thanks to Dr. Gloria Garner from Piedmont Augusta and the generous folks of the SERTOMA Club of North Augusta

A couple years later she went through the emotional stress of her dad getting married again and acquiring a third mother and new brothers.

And then finally, I say “finally” not because this will be the last challenge, but it is the most recent emotional challenge that she has had to face, one of her grandmothers passed away to cancer last year.

On top of all that, or perhaps it would be better to say, underlying all those experiences, is her ongoing difficulty with language. Being able to express what you feel about all of those things is so important for mental health but Marissa struggles with this. For a few years, we attributed the difficulties that she has in speaking to her deafness and the bilingual nature of our life. But over the past few years, it has become obvious that she also has mental or intellectual imitations. Under normal circumstances she has much difficulty communicating. It is a challenge for her to follow the train of thought of a conversation and it is difficult for her to express her thoughts in well-constructed sentences that make it easy for the listener to understand.

It would seem that these emotional challenges have overwhelmed Marissa. Shortly after her grandmother’s passing last year, she began to experience exaggerated mood swings, hallucinations and insomnia. We took her to see a psychiatrist in our city. Over the course of 9 months, he saw her during a few appointments and never arrived at an exact diagnosis but prescribed an antipsychotic and an antidepressant. Those extraordinary symptoms went away but we were not content with the idea that she would have to continue this medication for the immediate future.

Then, this August, we began to notice a change in her speaking, a change for the worse. At first we thought that perhaps she had a swollen tongue. But that is not the case. Fortunately she can eat and breathe with no problem, however it is now extremely difficult to understand what she says.

In late September she was seen by a pediatric neurologist. He examined her and concluded that it was not a result of brain damage. The following week we sought treatment with a pediatric psychiatrist. We told her Marissa’s history in the first session. And in the second session she met alone with Marissa but was really only able to understand written responses from Marissa.

This new psychiatrist recommended changing Marissa’s antipsychotic medicine for a two-week trial period to see if there are any changes with her tongue (ends 10/23). So far we have not seen any changes.

Please join with us in prayer for our dear Marissa. Please pray for healing, for wisdom and for peace.

Thank you for loving us in this way, *Peter & Jany*



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