

A Christian Perspective on ADHD

ADHD (Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder) is a rapidly spreading diagnosis, not just in the United States of America, but across the world. It is uncertain the exact source or cause of ADHD, but research seems to point towards a combination of factors: genetics, brain injuries, nutrition, and physical/social environments which possibly trigger an unbalance of chemical levels within the brain, which causes “inattentive” or “hyperactive-impulsive” behavior. Symptoms often displayed are described as a pattern of: not being able to complete work, fidgeting, squirming, interrupting, forgetfulness, impulsivity, hyperactivity, and disorganization. There is no standard diagnostic protocol for ADHD, rather medical professionals use many different behavioral checklists and rating scales in order to determine whether or not a patient is diagnosed with ADHD. Once diagnosed, the most common form of treatment is through stimulant medication. Stimulants increase the amount and longevity of certain chemical levels within the brain, and are the most common form of ADHD medication. There are nonstimulant treatments available, such as biofeedback, physical activity, being outdoors in nature, and cognitive behavioral therapy that have been used in order to treat ADHD as well.

However, there also exists much criticism amongst those who claim that ADHD is perhaps a pharmaceutical money-making scheme, one that exploits the ‘medicalization’ of problematic behaviors in children, especially in children who are expected to behave and learn a specific way in a public school. There exists much controversy between researchers who support ADHD and researchers who debate the legitimacy of ADHD as a true medical condition. For the follower of Jesus, does the Bible offer any wisdom concerning ADHD and/or symptoms of ADHD?

It has been suggested that perhaps Simon Peter displayed behavior of what would now be classified as symptoms of ADHD. Notice Peter’s impulsiveness in response to Jesus after the disciples obeyed His instructions to cast the nets into the deeper water and they caught a miraculous amount of fish, Peter rashly says “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!” ([Luke 5:8](#)) Peter again responds impulsively with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, in a way that could perhaps even be described as “hyperactive” when he suggests making

tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. ([Mark 9:5](#)) Peter's actions with the sword, cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant and then moments later his denial, on the night of Jesus' arrest, would seem to further indicate traits of hyperactive, impulsive behavior. ([John 18:10](#)) Perhaps even Jesus addressing Peter three times back to back, after the denial and resurrection ([John 21:15-17](#)), was an attempt of Jesus to make sure He was heard and communicating well His forgiveness and charge of love to one who struggled with, (perhaps) a learning disability, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity.

While suggesting that Peter had ADHD is highly speculative, one does get the impression from the gospel books that he does appear to be rash, impulsive, focused on the wrong things, and hard-headed. No matter where one stands on the validity of ADHD being a true medical condition or not, it is obvious that Jesus deeply loved Peter and used him powerfully, despite the negative character traits or negative medical symptoms he displayed.

Two other biblical passages to consider concerning ADHD is [1 Samuel 16:7](#), "God does not see as man sees, since man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" and [Romans 12:2](#) "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." In any attempt to help behavioral or mental symptoms, it is absolutely critical to consider what God's word says concerning the heart and mind. Often the outward symptom (outward appearance) is focused on, and treatment for the symptom is attempted, yet it is the heart that the Lord is most concerned with- it is often within the heart that the true root of the problem exists. The same can be said of the mind. This passage in Romans tells us that the life of the believer still needs transformation, and that transformation occurs through the renewing of the mind. It is the heart and the mind that control thoughts and behaviors, and both heart and mind need the redemptive, transformative, renewing work of Jesus in order to achieve the best results for life change.

Whether you are a parent whose child is expressing ADHD symptoms, or whether you, yourself, wrestle with ADHD symptoms, the example of Peter should be one of encouragement and hope. No matter the medical issue, the Bible is clear: Jesus has power to work through and use physical ailments for His glory and the benefit

of His people. But even in knowing God has the power to heal any infirmity and any issue of the heart/mind, it is perhaps tempting for the believer to ask God, "Why was I made like this- why do I have to wrestle with this issue?" The Bible cautions us against this thought process in [Isaiah 45:9](#) "*Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker-- An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands '?"* The question to God should not be "why Lord?" but rather, "What would you, Lord, have me do/know from this point moving forward?"

Now, I'm no doctor, and I have no right to counsel anyone medically, but because of the controversy surrounding ADHD, and because of increased concern surrounding brain altering prescriptions, I would encourage followers of Jesus to very prayerfully seek information and medical counsel before taking or administering ADHD medications. Prayerfully considering the state of the heart and mind *spiritually* is a good first step in attempting behavior modification. A next step might include trying some alternative, non-medicinal options, before ingesting mind altering pills. Research has proven that physical activity and being outside can help in focus and in allowing the release of vital chemicals in the brain. Nutrition, vitamin support, and diet modifications should also be considered in the treatment of ADHD symptoms.

Now, it might sound like I am completely against doctors and prescription medication- which I am not, that is not the case. My own child has a prescription for mind-altering medication that helps to control seizures. Rather, what I am advocating for, is that concerning matters of physical/mental/spiritual health- I am encouraging that we as believers, would seek first the Lord's help, prayerfully searching our hearts and minds looking for any disconnect between our lives and God's word, looking to see what resources and means that perhaps God has already provided naturally in this world, and then lastly prayerfully seek the counsel of doctors and medicine. So often it is doctors and medicines that we seek first, without giving any thought to the fact that we are children of the King, children of the Lord God Almighty, Creator of the Universe, the giver of life and gifts- the one who holds all power- even power to heal.

Ultimately, a believer wrestling with ADHD should take much comfort in the example of grace, patience, and forgiveness demonstrated by Jesus towards Simon Peter. We each are created so differently, each with such differing experiences and various struggles, and yet the love of Jesus extends to us all as He desires us to be formed more into His image, character, mindset, and behavior. God sees you, and loves you, may He give you wisdom, blessing, and victory in life as you pursue Him!