**My Life by Evan Smith**

Aged 14 years and 6 months (exactly)

Rachel: You and your friends and people who have got autism, how does that work?

Evan: Well it’s different, but it’s something you get used to, over time.

Rachel: When you say it is different, is that a good different or a bad different?

Evan: A good different.

Rachel: What makes it good?

Evan: Because people understand me and my friends.

Rachel: So you see it as a good different. Were you ever upset to find out you had autism?

Evan: No I don’t think so. I can’t remember.

Rachel: But you see it as a good thing.

Evan: Yes.

Rachel: What advice do you have for adults that work (say in Sunday School/youth groups) with children on the spectrum?

Evan: Don’t worry about it. Everyone is the same we’ve all got differences. Just don’t worry about it.

Rachel: What advice do you have that might help the adults when they are looking after the children?

Evan: If the child gets stressed, just allow them time away from the activity and come back when they’re calm.

Rachel: So it sounds like you are saying your advice to someone like me might be patient and take time to understand.

Evan: Research it.

Rachel: What do I need to research?

Evan: The difficulties, help people get used to it, all sorts about it.

Rachel: What sort of difficulties do your friends maybe have?

Evan: Just accept them. Sometimes they get worked up about things.

Rachel: I have seen that sometimes. Young people on the spectrum can have what looks like they are having temper tantrums or meltdowns. Have you seen that? What do you think happens?

Evan: They just block everything out. They just block everything round them and everyone out.

Rachel: What could someone like me do to help someone like that?

Evan: Just allow it to boil over.

Rachel: I might feel quite scared if I see someone meltdown, how could I deal with that?

Evan: You just have to cope with it.

Rachel: How do I cope with it?

Evan: Just don’t deal with it.

Rachel: Just don’t deal with it. Just give the person space? Don’t try and touch them or try and calm them down?

Evan: Yes touching them would make them more cross.

Rachel: You said “being autistic is a gift from God”, what do you mean by that?

Evan: It hasn’t been lumbered on me it’s something God has given one to help other people, so it’s not something that has just been given it’s actually a special gift.

Rachel: That’s a really lovely way of seeing that, a really special gift from God.