

William Lankford: Seeing the world again with Dragon.

Four years ago, William Lankford's diagnosis, of multiple sclerosis was bad enough. Then the 32-year-old was left legally blind, and he found his career as an ordained minister "in a dark place," he remembers. "As a minister and a student of God's word, reading is paramount, so I could not see a future without the ability to read."

Then Lankford recalled Dragon NaturallySpeaking, which he had heard about while managing a doctor's office a few years earlier. He gave it a try and says "it literally gave me my world back. Not only could I navigate my computer with ease, but my computer could read to me! By hearing the words, I am able to retain more than if I was reading. I am able to more efficiently keep notes, and I can study longer because my eyes don't get as fatigued as they would if I were reading."

Dragon's Command mode is also a blessing, says Lankford, "because with multiple sclerosis, there are times my hands won't work right. I can tell my computer what to do and it does it."

He adds: "Because of Dragon, I'm doing more with the computer. It opens new avenues for my ministry. I wasn't as interested in using PCs before."

Opening the whole world again

Lankford relies primarily on e-Sword, which features multiple translations of the Bible, commentaries, maps, definitions, and more. He uses Dragon to read specific passages and other information to him, and he will often open a Note Pad document below e-Sword so he can dictate notes and ideas while working on a sermon. "It's the way I've always preached," he observes.

In addition, he uses Dragon to handle many other aspects of his ministry, including reading and sending emails, writing letters, putting together documents, and more. Lankford also recently launched a website where he posts Bible studies and other essays that he dictates into Dragon, and his wife uses Dragon to listen to books, primarily Christian commentaries and literature, which he has started to do as well.

“When I first found out my vision was not coming back, I thought my life was over,” Lankford says. “If it wasn’t for technology like this, it probably would be. Dragon NaturallySpeaking makes my everyday life possible. You can’t put a price on something like that.”

Dragon has also become a key part of his personal life, Lankford says. “For someone with a life-changing disability like mine, you think a part of the world is shut off. Dragon opens the whole world for you again. It gave me the desire to get out in the world again and participate.”

As part of that, Lankford is going to school to become a counselor so he can help people with similar problems.

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