



PARENTING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEYS: REFLECTING GOD'S HEART THROUGH SPECIAL NEEDS PARENTING

Parenting is a deeply rewarding journey, but raising a child with special needs brings both extraordinary challenges and unique joys. Only those with first-hand experience truly understand the physical, emotional, and spiritual demands involved. Managing the needs of a child with disabilities requires a level of dedication and perseverance that few can fully appreciate. However, it also opens the door to profound blessings and a special connection with God's heart.

Whether you have just received a diagnosis, are adjusting to a new stage of care, or are finding your footing in a new season, this resource is offered as a source of encouragement and hope as you fulfill your God-given calling.

A COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES

The church that walks with these families believes every child is a gift from God, made in His image and reflecting His dignity. It also honors and supports those who care for children with special needs, recognizing the incredible effort and love they pour into their families.

To help lighten the load, healthy churches seek to offer one-on-one help during services so parents and guardians can focus on worship and study. The annual *Night to Shine* event, sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, crowns every participant as royalty, celebrating individuals with

special needs and their families. Churches that host it, along with other resources and events throughout the year, are committed to walking alongside these families, sharing in both their burdens and their joys, as together they seek to honor Christ in all things.

As you reflect on this unique calling, consider three important aspects: your blessing, your call, and your challenge.

YOUR BLESSING: A SPECIAL CONNECTION

Raising a child with special needs often leads parents to encounter the heart of God in ways that others may never experience. These children may face limitations in physical or academic pursuits, but they often thrive in the spirit, embodying pure love and dependence on God.

Scripture reminds us that each person is fearfully and wonderfully made: “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well” (Psalm 139:13–14).

Even those who cannot understand the written Word of God reflect His nature in their joy, vulnerability, and ability to love. As Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). Parenting these children provides a unique connection to God, seen in their smiles, laughter, and moments of delight that proclaim His joy and presence.

YOUR CALL: LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE

Parenting a child with special needs is one of the most difficult yet vital callings in the kingdom of God. It requires daily sacrifices and an unwavering commitment to serve your family.

Philippians 2:5–8 provides a powerful reminder of Christ’s example: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

All parents are called to mirror Christ’s humility and sacrificial love, but this calling takes on a deeper reality for those caring for special needs children. Every sacrifice you make, every sleepless night, and every act of love is noticed and honored by God. As Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

YOUR CHALLENGE:

FINDING SUPPORT AND REPLENISHMENT

Caring for a child with special needs can be exhausting, both physically and emotionally. To stay faithful in this calling, you need replenishment. Finding moments of rest and support is not a luxury—it is a necessity.

Isaiah offers encouragement for those who feel weary: “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:29–31).

However, practical support can often feel out of reach. You may struggle to find people who understand your child’s needs or know how to help. That’s why a church committed to these families steps in with one-on-one care during services, special events like *Night to Shine*, and other resources designed to give you the breaks you need.

Stephen Covey’s principle of “sharpening the saw” reminds us to stay sharp by restoring physical, emotional, and spiritual strength. Jesus Himself modeled the need for rest: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Parenting a child with special needs is an extraordinary journey that reflects God’s heart and brings Him glory. While the challenges are real, so are the blessings. Those who walk this road are not alone—God sees their faithfulness, and a church body that embraces these families is here to support and encourage them every step of the way. Among those communities are many members, including professionals, who can relate, respond, and guide in this calling. They are here to provide advice, encouragement, and direction when questions or challenges arise.

As Paul reminds us, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9). May you find strength in His promises and joy in the unique calling He has placed upon your life. While this pamphlet may not answer every question, we want you to know: “God sees you, God sustains you, and He, along with your church family, is FOR you.”

GOING FURTHER: RESOURCES

Exceptional Parenting by Ginny Whitehouse

Disability and the Gospel by Michael S. Beates

The Life We Never Expected by Andrew and Rachel Wilson

Finding Glory in the Thorns by Larry and Lisa Jameson

God Made Me Unique by Joni and Friends

Parenting Special Needs Children by Andrew M. T. Horne

Shattered Dreams by Larry Crabb

<https://nathanielshope.org/>



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