

RAISING A
CHILD WITH
**SPECIAL
NEEDS**



HomeLife

Building your family's faith at home

— **Guides** —

RAISING A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

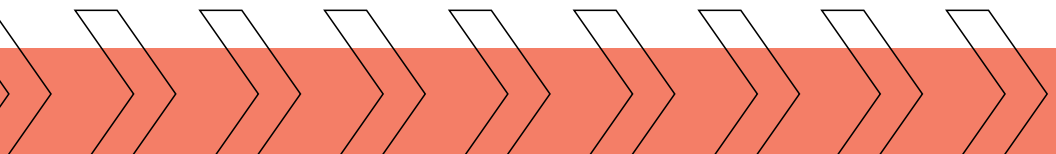
> *Only those with first-hand experience truly understand the blessing and challenges of raising a child with special needs. Parenting is hard work under the best of circumstances. When you add managing the needs of a child with physical or mental disabilities, it can bring a whole new level of physical and emotional stress for parents. It also brings a level of joy others rarely comprehend.*

Whether you have just recently received a troubling diagnosis, are moving into a new stage of care, or have just started attending this church, we want to be a source of encouragement and hope as you fulfill your calling to parent a child with special needs. We believe every child is a gift from God made in His image and reflecting His dignity. We also consider those caring for children with special needs worthy of special honor and support. To become intentional about your unique situation, we encourage you to reflect on your blessing, your call and your challenge.

YOUR BLESSING

A Special Connection

Those nurturing a child with special needs often encounter the heart of God in ways that can only be described as a spiritual mystery. While these children may be unable to participate in certain physical and/or academic pursuits, they can thrive in the most important arena of life – the spirit. Even those who can't understand the written Word of God embody what it means to love and be loved as one totally dependent upon the Giver and Sustainer of life. Those honored to serve these children are given a unique connection with the God whose image they bear – seen in a gazing smile, a shrieking laugh, or an unspoken moment of delight that proclaims to all “the refreshing water of God’s joy is available to us all.”



YOUR CALL

Laying Down Your Life

You have one of the most difficult yet vital callings in the kingdom of God. How can you maintain the ongoing energy and passion needed to parent a child with special needs?

There's no other way to do it than to daily embrace the call to lay down your life. Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV) says:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross!

All Christian parents are called to mirror Jesus by taking on "the very nature of a servant" at home. But it is especially real in the midst of the never-ending sacrifices demanded of those caring for special needs children. Even if those around you never understand the load you bear, you play a part that is immensely important from God's perspective and is credited as serving Christ Himself (Matthew 25:40).

YOUR CHALLENGE

Finding Support and Replenishment

Whether your child has mild or severe needs, you require replenishment in order to stay faithful and avoid burnout. You need practical help and spiritual nourishment. Businessman and author Stephen Covey talks about the importance of "sharpening the saw" – of prioritizing physical, emotional and spiritual restoration so that your efforts can be fueled with new strength and purpose that can only come from God. You and your child need periodic breaks. Of course, making that happen can be difficult because there are very few who offer to help, and those who do may not understand what to do, your child's unique needs, or just how hard it can be. We, as a church, are here to help support and walk beside you.

Going Further Resources

Held: Learning to Live in God's Grip by **Lee and Sandra Peoples** // *This is a Bible study written for special-needs parents by special-needs parents. It will teach you that you are not alone; even when life feels out of control, it will help you remember He is in control.*

Bible Promises for Parents of Children with Special Needs by **Amy E. Mason** // *Offers a guide that speaks directly to the unique journey of special needs parenting, helping you claim God's promises for your everyday life.*

Refresh: Spiritual Nourishment for Parents of Children with Special Needs by **Kimberly M. Drew & Jocelyn Green** // *This devotional guides parents to spiritual truths that can be applied to the demands they face every day. It offers perspective and hope through the varying stages and phases families experience, from diagnosis to loss and grief.*

Going Further Prestonwood Support

Special Friends ministers to children, students and adults, focusing on the unique strengths of each individual to allow for spiritual growth so that they may come to know Jesus Christ. We believe everyone has an ability to "Love God, Love People, Do Your Best, and Have Fun!" Our classes and activities are designed to cultivate a student's desire for a Savior and to develop his or her faith. Our Special Friends can worship, grow, and serve as a part of the Prestonwood family.

If you are new to the Special Friends Ministry, welcome! There's no need to preregister, but if you would like to share information before your first visit, please fill out the intake form at prestonwood.org/specialfriends.

For additional resources, scan code:



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