



LET'S BEGIN HERE

When you pray, how do you address the Lord? When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He didn't use impersonal, clinical, or stuffy terminology to talk to God. Instead, Jesus simply said, "Our *Father*" (Matthew 6:9, emphasis added).

We've been adopted into God's family and can call Him "Daddy" (Romans 8:15)—how extraordinary! And God delights in us because we are His children. Psalm 37:23 says,

The LORD directs the steps of the godly.
He delights in every detail of their lives.

One of the most profound ways parents can teach their children a sound theology of God is to *enjoy* their children. This doesn't mean unbridled and undisciplined indulgence, but it doesn't mean intractable and inflexible discipline either.

What does it mean to delight in one's children as a reflection of God's delight? Let's take a look.



DIGGING DEEPER

This study is all about taking the lesson of delighting in our children out of the realm of abstract concept and into vivid reality with tangible action steps.

Chuck highlights several key ways to express delight in the children in our lives.



What Does the Bible Say About It? Let's Correlate

In this exercise, find one or two Scriptures that support the following attributes of delight that Chuck adapts from 1 Thessalonians 2:7 and 2:12. (An example is provided for each attribute.)

Quotable

*May we become
reacquainted with
what it means
to delight in our
children, to find
pleasure in them,
and them in us.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



BIBLICAL PARENTING

Delighting in Your Children

1 Thessalonians 2:5–12

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STUDY

Know your child's world. Tenderly meet his or her needs.
(Matthew 19:13)

Care enough to warn him or her of life's pitfalls.
(Proverbs 6:20)

Exhort (Chuck notes that this word is taken from a term that means “to treat someone in a congenial manner/to invite/to speak in a friendly manner”) your child.
(Colossians 3:21)

Encourage your child.
(Deuteronomy 11:18–21)

Implore (from the term that means “to affirm in a supportive manner/speak well of”) your child.
(Luke 11:11–13)



Straight from the Scriptures: What Delighting in Your Children Is . . . and Is Not

The Bible provides us with concrete wisdom passages—such as Proverbs 22:6—that teach readers how to parent well. In addition to the wisdom texts, God also provides stories in His Word that vividly serve as warnings to those who may be tempted to parent passively.



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One example of biblical narrative that reinforces the need for vigilant parenting is found in 1 Samuel, with a dad named Eli and a mom named Hannah.

Eli was not a foreigner but a citizen of the nation of Israel. He wasn't just an Israelite; he was a Levite priest—born to serve the Lord. In an era of biblical history when the chosen people relied on the priesthood for access to and acceptance from God, Eli wasn't a sparkling example of one who discerned God's will or voice.

For example, Eli thought Hannah was drunk when she was praying fervently that God would bless her with a child (1 Samuel 1:12–16).

Note how Eli responded in 1:12–14. What are some of the verbs used to describe his actions?

He watched Hannah. He presumed. Then he rebuked her. He acted at once to correct what he observed as wicked behavior. These are good responses in general, but in Eli's case the responses were grounded in a fundamental disconnection from godly discernment. Why? Eli relied too much on his eyes without investigating Hannah's circumstances or allowing room for God's prompting.

Let's rewind to Hannah. We're given the context of her tearful prayers: she was also an Israelite from Ephraim and one of Elkanah's *two* wives. She was barren (1:1–2). This complicated family would trek yearly to the tabernacle to make sacrifices. Every year, Peninnah (Elkanah's other wife) would taunt Hannah because of her barrenness. Hannah's barrenness had another implication in her ancient Near Eastern context: every year she grew older without a child meant increased chances of her becoming a widow with no one to provide for her. In light of this, every year, instead of worshiping, she wept. Instead of eating, she fasted.

One day, she thought she would cry somewhere else, to Someone besides “better-than-having-ten-sons” Elkanah (1:8). This choice changed her life and the history of Israel:

Once after a sacrificial meal at Shiloh, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli the priest was sitting at his customary place beside the entrance of the Tabernacle. Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD. And she made this vow: “O LORD of Heaven's Armies, if you will look upon my sorrow and answer my prayer and give me a son, then I will give him back to you. He will be yours for his entire lifetime, and as a sign that he has been dedicated to the LORD, his hair will never be cut.” (1:9–11)



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What does this prayer say about Hannah's faith and character?

I will give him back to you. What phenomenal faith! Hannah promised God a sacrificial gratitude and wagered her own inheritance on His goodness.

God responded to Hannah's faith, and she gave birth to Samuel (1 Samuel 1:19–20). Hannah lovingly, tenderly cared for and nourished her little one (1:22–23), no doubt delighting in him. Then, she kept her promise and dedicated Samuel to the Lord right after he was weaned, and they worshiped the Lord there (1:27–28).

Now, let's contrast Hannah's faith and God's response with Eli's behavior toward his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, and God's response.

Read 1 Samuel 2:12–3:1 and answer the following questions:

In what ways did Hophni and Phinehas treat the Lord with contempt?

Did Hannah forget Samuel? How did she continue to be present in his life? How did the Lord respond?

Did Eli know what his sons were up to? How did he find out (2:24)?



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How did Eli hear the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 2:27–36; 3:11–14)? Considering this, what is the symbolism of Eli’s blindness (3:2)?

Why wasn’t God satisfied with Eli’s rebuke of his sons? Why wasn’t that attempt good enough?

As Samuel grew in stature and discernment, Eli declined. His passive parenting had resulted in the serial degradation of the sacrifices of the people of Israel. What an affront to a holy God! Eli failed to follow up with action his rebukes to Hophni and Phinehas. He was so unaware of the day-to-day of his children’s spiritual and vocational lives that he had to be informed by other people in the community. His passivity preceded his stunted legacy and the deaths of his sons.

In contrast, Hannah delighted in Samuel. She prayed over his future before she knew him—that he would be a Nazirite, voluntarily devoted to God all his life, and that he would serve the Lord in His tabernacle. She nourished him. From her song of praise in 1 Samuel 2, it’s clear that she knew God’s Word and probably sang theology over her nursing child, planting seeds of godliness within him. The little ephods she sewed him were tangible gifts of encouragement and warm reminders of her love. Hannah helped prepare Samuel to be the man God created him to be—a man who would hear God’s voice.



Up Close

We all have children in our lives whom we have the privilege and unique opportunity to love with delight. We don’t have to wait to apply this lesson to our lives—we can begin today! Here are some practical suggestions on how to delight in your children (please note: the possibilities are endless!):

- Send care packages to your college-aged child (even if he or she lives at home!).
- Make a surprise visit to your elementary-school-aged child at school.
- Ask your adult child how you can pray for him or her each week for a month.



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- Write and frame a prayer for your child, praising God for him or her, and naming unique things that you love about him or her.
- Write words of encouragement in dry-erase marker on your bathroom mirror for each child.
- Take your children out for interview dates: take lots of selfies, eat yummy food, and ask them interview questions.
- Make a list of all the gifts you see in each child. Pray through them, dedicating each gift to God.
- Make sure that when you connect with your children (no matter their age), you look directly at *them*. Put ALL your devices away and communicate nonverbally that you are listening.

Picture one of the children in your life. (He or she can be an adult son or daughter too!) Jot down some ways that you intend to delight in him or her this week.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, what a joy it is to call you Father. Please help me to reflect Your delight and love for Your children in how I delight and love mine. Thank you for the blessing of these children. Help me to dedicate them to You and guide them in the paths that You have laid for them. Amen.



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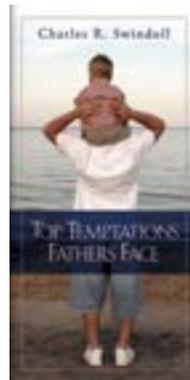
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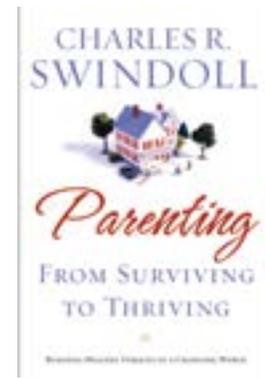
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For the 2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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