

**Practicing This One Thing:  
How to Pray for Our Children  
Luke 1:14-16**

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**Text Introduction:** We are in the middle of a prayer challenge. We are calling our challenge “This One Thing.” This is not only guiding our times together on Sunday morning as we examine the Scriptures about prayer, but we are also challenging one another about our discipline and habits of prayer. And what a time it is to pray! I could not have imagined the importance of this effort when God birthed this in my heart early this summer. But, now, all of this makes perfect sense, right?

I want to share with you today about a subject that hits at the heart of where so many of us live—“How to Pray for Our Children?” (Or Grandchildren, or nephews, or nieces, or children next door) I heard a wonderful testimony this week by a gentleman who had no parents in his life as an adult. Another man and his wife had no children. The older couple approached the younger man and said, “We never had any children, but if we had a son, we would want him to be like you. Would you be our son?” And with that conversation, a relationship was begun. Maybe you have someone in your life like that. Nevertheless, I think all of us can benefit today from this lesson on “How to Pray for Our Children?”

The text today is from Luke. The parents are Zechariah and Elizabeth. The child is the one known as John the Baptist—the one called and used by God to be the forerunner to Jesus.

The angel said to them concerning their soon to be born son:

Text: There will be joy and delight for you,  
and many will rejoice at his birth.  
15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord  
and will never drink wine or beer.  
He will be filled with the Holy Spirit  
while still in his mother’s womb.  
16 He will turn many of the sons of Israel  
to the Lord their God.

**Introduction:** We have to be careful when applying these narrative portions of the Gospels. We have to make sure that we don’t assume on the text what was meant for a particular person or persons.

Having said that, when the angel told Zechariah that he and his wife were going to have a son (John the Baptist) the angel also pronounced a blessing upon this “soon-to-be-born” son. The nature of a blessing makes such pronouncements synonymous with prayer. We can use the angel’s blessing as a basis of how to pray for our children.

Beth Moore in her book, *Jesus, the One and Only*, suggests this about the angel’s blessing: “We breathe a huge sigh of relief over a sonogram showing all the right appendages. **What we’d give for a few guarantees about their character?**” Though praying this prayer produces no guarantees concerning your

children or grandchildren, here is a prayer that ought to be an everyday occurrence in our communion with our Heavenly Father.

***Pray for your children to be . . .***

**1. A reason for joy always.**

Now, the first thing to note in this passage is the relationship between the announcement and thanksgiving. "There will be joy and delight for you and many will rejoice at his birth." This is the easy part of this passage. It is easy to be thankful for children when they are born. I saw the smiles a moment ago when these children were walked across the stage. Grandparents have come from long distances today to see these grandchildren. People that usually sit in the back are sitting in the front.

Psalm 127 is a great Psalm. In part it says:

Sons are indeed a heritage from the LORD,  
children, a reward.

<sup>4</sup> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the sons born in one's youth.

<sup>5</sup> Happy is the man who has filled his quiver with them.

Children are gifts from the Lord, and we are thankful.

Well, most of the time. Sometimes the joy leaves. John said, "I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children are walking in the truth. (3 John 4)

We pray that we would always be able to give thanks for our children.

**2. Great in the sight of the Lord.**

See Luke 7:28. Jesus said, "I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John."

What do you think of when you think of greatness? If you had a wish for your child to be great, what would that be? A great doctor? A great athlete? A great musician? Or maybe even make that request more spiritual. A great preacher?

"John's greatness is not found in his choice of lifestyle, but in the fact that in understanding his calling, he pursues it fully and carries out God's will faithfully." (Darrell Bock, *NIV Application Commentary*, p. 53-54.)

To be great in the sight of God is to find one's purpose in life and fulfill it.

**3. Able to Steer Clear of the temptations of this World.**

The blessing is given in this passage that "he will drink no wine or liquor." Based on my experiences as a pastor and my observations of those with addictions, I believe the womb is the right time for you to begin praying for your children to stay clear of alcohol. In our contemporary culture we would do well to add to that list any number of other things that Satan uses to tempt our children.

Add to that list—drugs, sexual purity, pornography, gambling, and other things that Satan uses to bring our children into his grips.

#### **4. Saved and Filled with the Spirit.**

Again, the specific blessing in this passage is that John the Baptist be filled with the Spirit of God. Our theology teaches us that to be saved and to be filled with the Spirit are synonymous. The greatest prayer you will ever make and the greatest prayer that will be answered is for your children to be saved. If you don't understand and appreciate that statement, you haven't understood your own salvation or the will of God for your life.

#### **5. Used by God to Point others to Him.**

This goes back to greatness. Again, not a preacher, evangelist, or missionary necessarily. Just a person who walks with God and points others to Him.

**Conclusion: Don't miss verse 6. To pray is one thing, to lead by example is quite another.**

Now, for some, this is a tough message because you have a child that is far away from God this morning. You think it is too late.

One of the most heartwarming examples of our time has been the restoration of evangelist Billy Graham's son, Franklin. Now an ordained minister, director of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and Samaritan's Purse, this young man was once a rebel—far away from God. One night while praying for her "lost lamb," as Ruth Graham called Franklin, she slipped to her knees to once again commit him to the Lord. Ruth realized she must first "commit what was left of me to God." She did this, then sought God's response.

Ruth says "God impressed upon me, 'You take care of the possible, and trust Me for the impossible.'" On the day of Franklin's ordination, his mother shared her story and added, "Today you are seeing the impossible."

We began by saying, "What we'd give for a few guarantees about their character?" Though there are no guarantees, should it not be our response to commit ourselves deeply to praying for our children?

Pray for you children. Pray with your children. Lead by great example.