

Welcome to Empowering
Homeschool Conversations,
your authority in
navigating the world of
homeschooling diverse learners.
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Sped Homeschool,
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Stephanie Buckwalter from ELARP Learning,
and Dawn Jackson from Dawn
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With over 75 years of
combined homeschooling expertise,
experiences, and perspectives,
this group is eager to
share their wealth of
wisdom to empower your
homeschooling journey.
So grab your favorite mug, settle in,
and get ready for insightful discussions,
valuable insights, and practical tips.
Give your homeschool the
power boost it needs to
successfully educate the
unique learners in your home.
Hi, I'm Stephanie Buckwalter,
your host for today,

and our guest is Jen Salen.

Jen Salen is a mother of two boys who are precious blessings and who both have special needs.

She enjoys writing about faith, praying scripture, and special needs parenting at embracing.life.

Jen is the author of Embracing the Special Child.

Oh, sorry.

Embracing the Special Life and On the Same Page with God.

She loves spending time with her family, curling up with a good book and a cup of coffee.

Oh, and enjoying a wonder walk through nature.

Welcome, Jen.

Thank you.

Thank you for having me.

Cool.

Well, let's get started.

I'm excited to talk to Jen today.

She is a personal friend, a colleague.

We're both writers.

And I'm so excited to share
her with you all because
she's got a lot of insight
into something that we all struggle with.

And that's the spiritual
part of being a special needs parent.

So let's start with telling
us about a little bit of
your journey with special
needs parenting.

Okay.

So like you mentioned in the bio,
I have two sons.

My oldest son is now 14.

And when he was born,
he was diagnosed with a
profound hearing loss in his right ear.

And as he was growing,
we realized he wasn't
meeting any of his milestones.

So we started physical therapy.

And then before long,
we started speech therapy.

And then we started
um occupational therapy and
you know how it just kept
going from there um since
then he's been diagnosed
with apraxia of speech and

processing disorders and
learning disorders um and
then my younger son just
turned 12 and he is on the
autism spectrum wow you've
had had to rerun the gamut
They're a little bit and it
sounds like it wasn't all at once.

It was one thing and then it
kind of things hide other
things and then you start finding out.
It's just like, how do you deal with that?

That ongoing,
that slow revelation of more
and more problems.

How did you deal with that?

Um, for,

I was very overwhelmed and I was
like trying to like figure
out what's going on.

I kind of viewed my kids like a puzzle.

Like I have to figure out all these pieces,
figure out what's going on,
get the diagnosis they need.

So then I can get them the
support that they need and
the therapies they need.

And so I was constantly like

in research mode and like
my life revolved around all
their therapies and it, it, it was,
it was just very overwhelming.

And I think that we've all been there.

yeah now at some point you

decided to write a book

about this journey and I

actually own a copy of this

book embracing this special

life and it's uh it was a

big help to me when I was

early in my special needs

journey she's written the

book a few years ago tell me about

Why you decided to write a

book about special needs parenting?

What was the driving

motivation for actually

putting all of this pain

and struggle down on paper

for other people to read?

That's hard because it's

like I resisted writing it

for such a long time because, you know,

life was already hard with

all their therapies and all

the challenges already.

But it was like God just

kept teaching me thing
after thing that I needed
to embrace in the special
needs parenting journey.

And it was so
transformational for me to
start embracing those
things that I felt compelled,
like I had to share this
with other people.

And so I started blogging it,
but then it was like, God's like, no,
this is a book.

And I was like, no,
I don't want to write a book, but,
but it just, it wouldn't go away.

I just,
and I just kept getting more and more,
like you just kept teaching
me more and more things
that I needed to embrace.

And I knew I needed to share
it with people.

And so then I started
writing it when I finally was like, okay,
God, I'll be obedient.

That's amazing.

I know that's the hardest

thing is like just finally giving in.

But the first,

in the beginning of your book,

you tell the story about,

so I'm going to cry, the turning point.

Well, I had an emotional day already,

so this is just more of the same.

The turning point,

it's like early in the book,

the turning point of when, when you,

you had to surrender

something and you had to release.

So if you can kind of tell,

retell that story that's

it's in the book too,

but to retell it here.

Yeah.

It's in the first chapter.

So like I, okay.

So I already shared my kids,

like lots of diagnosis,

lots of therapies.

I struggled a lot with

anxiety and like having

panic attacks just because

of all the things going on.

And then I started having

issues with my marriage and

I just I got I honestly got mad at God.

Like, why?

Why is all this hard stuff
happening when I'm trying
to love you and serve you?

And and yeah,
it's just hard thing after
hard thing was happening.

And one day I had like a we
were we were at the beach
on a family vacation.

And honestly,
it was like a really nice
vacation that we had.

And then I started thinking about, OK,
we need to pack up to go back home.

And I did not want to go
back home to where all the
therapies and the craziness was.

And I had like the most
severe panic attack that
I'd had at that point.

Like it was bad.

I thought it was like dying
type of panic attack.

And so my husband's like,
why don't you go out on the
beach and just be still?

And I was like, okay.

So I go out on the beach and
I'm just like weeping and
I'm like watching these waves.

And I'm like, God,
I really need you to show up right now.

And I expected more silence
from God because I'd been
hearing a lot of silence
from God and it was making me frustrated,
angry, discouraged.

But he whispered the word embrace to me.

And I know it was God because I'm like,
what is there to embrace in
my life right now?

Like everything's so hard.

Um, so I know that it was God and he,

I felt like the Holy spirit
and God just spoke to my
heart and I just shared
with me thing after thing
after thing that I needed
to embrace in this journey.

First of all, God,
that he was trustworthy and
that he was with me and
that he had a plan and a purpose.

He,
he convicted me of ways that I needed
to embrace my husband and,

and like we needed to journey together.

He showed me that I needed
to embrace myself because
it was so hard on myself
that I wasn't doing enough,
that I wasn't good enough,
that I was failing my kids.

You know,
those insecurities and the mom
guilt that we feel.

And then the one that
surprised me the most was
that I needed to embrace my children.

And I was like,
what are you talking about?
Everything I do is for my kids.

But I was reminded,
like he reminded me of the
verse in 1 Samuel that man
looks at outward appearance,
but God looks at the heart.

And I had been so focused on
their development, on their milestones,
on their behaviors,
that I wasn't just
embracing and loving them
for who they were and how
they're wonderfully made

and the gifts and strengths

that they do have.

And so as I learned to

embrace those things,

it really did transform and

change my special needs

parenting journey and my

relationships with my kids

and with God and with my husband.

And so I felt like I needed

to share it with others.

Wow.

How was the ride home?

It was, it was peaceful and there was,

there was like a lot to process.

Yeah.

And I feel like I'm still

processing it all sometimes.

Yeah.

That's, that's quite a story.

And then at what point, let me see.

Well, the book,

alternates chapters between

embracing and releasing.

And I thought that was

really good because when I read the book,

I was like, I had, you know, same things.

I wasn't embracing much about this life.

There wasn't much to embrace, I thought.

And then after reading that,
but then there was also the
part of releasing.

Can you talk about that a little bit?

About all the things you had to release?

Yes.

So I had been writing all
this stuff about embracing
life and websites embracing life.

And this book was about
embracing the special life.

But I realized that we can't
just keep embracing all of this stuff.

We're not meant to.

There's things that we're
meant to let go of, to release.

You know,

like a fall when they let go of
their leaves so that
they're stronger for winter.

Yeah.

And so then I started
thinking of all the things
that we need to release, you know,
like our expectations and
our own will and our own
desires and our
insecurities and all these

different things so that we,
as we release those things,
then we have more room to
embrace the good things
that God has for us and the
things that he wants for us
to be embracing.

That's the give and take.

I think that's hard because
everything just piles on
and piles on and piles on.

And like you said,

you think you're embracing it,
but you really can't do it all.

And I think that's just a big lie.

No matter where you are in life,
you can't do it all.

Everything you want to do,
everything you think you should do,
there's a limit.

We have limits.

And they're not bad limits.

I mean, when we have kids,

we put limits on our kids.

for a reason so that they can handle.

So, you know,

we limit them to what they can handle.

And I think sometimes God

does that with us.

He tries to limit what's
around us so that we can handle what we,
what, you know, the important things,
the things that he has for us to do,
but we keep hanging on to
all these other things.

And my home is a witness to that.

When I I'm not the best
housekeeper in the world.

And when I had four boys,
And they're about five and a half years.

Right.

So they're really close together.

And we just kept getting
more and more boy stuff and
we got four of everything.

And then there was like a
four and a half year break.

And then my daughter comes along.

And right about the time
they were moving into, you know,
middle school where they'd
start getting where the
toys get smaller and use
less space in your house
instead of all the big things, you know,
the big, the smaller the child,
the bigger the toys, right?

Until you're an adult,
then you get things like cars,
but in general,
because they go to like
video games and things like that.
And right at the time they
were making that switch was
when my daughter came along
and I was so overwhelmed with her.
I just neglected my house for 10 years.
Literally 10 years.
I just didn't get rid of
anything of the boys were
finished with because, you know,
I didn't have to think
about it because they didn't need it.
So I didn't have to maintain
it or do anything with it.
And then it, you know,
caught up with me 10 years later,
I'm finally in a position to look at it.
And like, even today,
I still have some of that
stuff around to the point
where when I had grandkids,
I still had like a little play yard,
you know, the packing play,
I had a little high chair
that clips on the table.

So now it's kind of come full circle,
my kids got married early.

So I've had

I've been guilty of hanging
on to things myself that I
probably don't need to even
now with what I still have
around from my old life.

And now my daughter just
graduated this year and
she's the last one that I
was homeschooling.

I have all these books and
all these things.

We're still working with her
because she's development
delayed and moderate
intellectual disability.

So I still can use a lot of
the things I have,
but I really need to sort
through and figure out
which ones I need and which
ones I don't because I'm
not releasing my past life.

Basically what's no longer
serving me today.

And that's, that's kind of a,

that's kind of a thing.

Did you find that happen
with you where you're
releasing like just stuff, not just,
yeah yeah I mean yeah it
started with like spiritual
stuff for me but then it
did trickle down to
possessions like getting
rid of the baby clothes
because we had initially
planned on having like
three or four kids and then
I felt like god was sending
us down a different path
and that was hard for me to
let go of so I end up
letting go of the baby
clothes and the baby toys
and and all that stuff so
yeah it is hard also I had
to learn to like
release some of the
therapies like I thought we
have to be doing everything
so that you know our kids
can you know thrive but but
it was wearing us all out
and we weren't enjoying

life when our life revolved
around all the therapies so
so we had to release some
things and like focus on
like what's what's
important in this season
for like which therapies
and and activities are best
for our family at this
season so that also was
another thing I had to
release was all that busyness yeah

What criteria did you use to
figure out what to release?

Or was it you just prayed
about it and you knew?

Or did you go through an
evaluation process?

How did that work?

For like the therapies and stuff,
it was me talking with my husband because

Like me,

I wanted to do everything and do
all the things.

And then he had a better
idea of our finances and budget.

And so it was like, okay,
what's realistic for our

family and for our schedule?

Which therapy did he see was helping our kids?

That kind of thing.

So I felt like I needed someone helping me to figure it out.

But also sometimes I just felt convicted of certain things that I needed to release or let go of.

Yeah.

Now, at some point, we're going to switch back into prayer when at some point you noted that you changed the way you prayed.

When did that happen in relation to that incident on the beach?

And how did your prayer life change?

So before the beach,

I was a lot more focused on,

I was constantly praying

for the things that I

wanted to see happen.

And then I was getting angry at God, discouraged because it wasn't happening.

You know,

I was praying for my kids to be healed.

I was praying for them to start talking.

I was praying for my anxiety
to go away and those things
weren't happening.

So it was when I

I was on the beach and God
taught me about embrace and
about surrender.

Well,

I learned about surrender afterward
that I realized I've been
praying according to my will.

But I didn't know what to do about it.

I just like I knew prayer is
important and I should be
praying and I want to be praying.

But I didn't know, like,
how do I really surrender
besides saying I surrender
and then immediately taking
everything back?

Because that's what we tend to do.

And so it was I think it was
like six months after the beach.

I was at Bible study.

um and at the end of the
bible study the bible study
leader asked if we had any
prayer requests and usually

you know surface level like
oh pray for this therapy or
this evaluation or you know
very surface level stuff
but I just it was like the
holy spirit just made it
all like pour out of me and
I like shared about all
these like discouragements
I have about prayer and
about faith and these
struggles I was having
And all the ladies in the Bible study,
like they put down their
stuff and they gathered
around me and they laid
hands on me and each and
every one of them prayed for me.
And I just started crying
because I felt the power of God there.
And I felt the peace and I felt the love,
not only of those women,
but of God as well.
And here's the thing,
I can't remember a single thing,
specific thing that they prayed for me,
but I do know that every
single one of them included
scripture because I recognized it.

And so they were including
scripture and they were
praying over me and over my
kids and over my faith and
over my marriage.

And it was so powerful to me.

And I realized like,
that's what I was missing.

I was praying what I wanted,
But to know that I'm praying what he wants,
I need to be praying his word.

And so that's when I started
learning about and
beginning to practice praying scripture.

What kind of things did you
find in the Bible to pray
for special needs kids?

Because there's Miss
Bibishef who had the ankle
in David's house.

She came and lived in
David's house with Jonathan's son.

but what there's, you know, there,
and there's, you know,

Jesus did all this healing,
but there's not a lot of,
there are not a lot of examples.

So what did you pray for?

How did you find verses to pray?

So the first thing is like,

I had been praying for a

long time for my boys to start talking.

Cause you know,

we were doing speech therapy, but,

and we use sign language,

but they weren't

using any verbal words.

And I'd been praying and

praying for them to start

talking and they weren't.

So I decided to find

scriptures to pray for their speech.

That was the first thing I did.

So I like looked up every

single scripture that had

to do with talking or words or whatever.

And then I started praying those.

And the one that I found

like my favorite was is in

Proverbs where it says a

word fitly spoken is like

apples of gold in settings of silver.

Mm-hmm.

And it was like, you know,

every word that our kids say,

they work hard for and we treasure it.

And so I claimed that and I

would pray for apples of gold,
whether it was signed or spoken.

And then when they learned a
new word or a new sign,
I would praise God for that, you know,
that sweet apple of gold
that I treasured.

And it was powerful to me to
use God's words to pray for
my kids' words.

I also found...

Moses, you know, Moses, you know, was,
we don't know what his
issue with speech was.

He just said that he didn't
want to talk to the Pharaoh
because he had issues with this.

I can't remember the words he said.

And then God sent him Aaron
to speak for him or speak with him.

And so that was so
encouraging to me to be like, well,

I can be like our kids, Aaron.

My husband's like our kids, Aaron.

helping our kids to
communicate with the world.

But God still used Moses.

And so that was a great

scripture to pray as well.

That's good.

That's very dear to my heart

because I have a nonverbal

daughter praying and

looking at all the speech

things because there's a

lot of talking in the Bible.

There is.

There's a lot to say about our words.

And yes.

Yeah.

And how, so that was in the beginning.

So fast forward now,

how was their speech now?

Um, okay.

So now they're 14 and 12 and they are,

they're still in speech therapy.

Um, they, they both can speak in sentences,

but a lot of times it's

very hard to understand.

So sometimes we have to

translate for them.

Um,

But I mean,

they've made a lot of progress

and that's very awesome to

see God answer that prayer.

That's cool.

Because I remember,
I think you were talking
about it in somewhere I
read that you wrote about
how the changes were small at first.

And like you said,
like just even rejoicing
over one word at a time
that that was small.
that was sufficient to be
and recognized as an answer to prayer,
which hadn't been happening
before that when you were
just praying for what you wanted.

Yeah.

I just wanted them to like
miraculously start talking.

Didn't work that way.

It was one word at a time
and then eventually two
word phrases at a time.

Yeah.

Now I have an observation and a question.

So one time many years ago,
I did a 90 day prayer challenge.

And the idea was you're
supposed to pick three or
four people to pray for them.

You pray for them every day for 90 days.

You don't tell them you're
praying for them and just
watch what happens.

Right.

So you couldn't tell them
during the 90 days that you were praying,
whether you're doing this challenge.

Okay.

And I discovered, of course,
being a type A personality, I picked 10,
10 people to pray for.

Well, nine people in our church.

You're an overachiever.

And at the end of the 90 days,

I realized that

For every person,
everything I was praying
for each of those people,
God had used me in some
small way to answer those prayers.

So there's like a whole lot
of things I can, you know,
deduce from that is like, you know,
when it's on your radar,
because you're praying for it,
you see God working,
whereas if it's not on your radar,
you don't.

But also...

sometimes in now this makes
me afraid to pray for certain people.

Cause it's like, Oh no,

I'm going to have to go

deal with the thing, you know,

real that I'm praying for.

God's going to put me in the

middle of that and I don't

want to be there.

So, but how did,

so as you were praying for

your children's speech and other,

other things that were going on,

how much did God use you in the process?

You know,

but it didn't happen all at

once and how much of it

involved including you in

the process I mean yeah

because for my kids speech

it was continually taking

them to speech therapy and

continually working on them

with their speech and just

being very involved in the

entire process so yeah what

other and yeah

What other therapies did you
keep in addition to speech
during that time?

Or did you,
or was that the one thing you
wanted to focus on?

I mean, that was the main one we did.

And we would alternate
between like occupational
therapy or physical therapy,
or if there was a certain
therapy they needed,
like my older son needed
vision therapy for a while.

So we always kept speech and
then we'd do one other therapy if needed.

And yeah.

Okay.

Okay.

That's cool.

Let me check here because
there was something else I
wanted to make sure I asked you about.

Okay.

Well, I think we covered it all.

The ones that I had thought about.

Now, talk about your kids' education.

Are they homeschooled?

Are they private schooled?

Are they public schooled?

What kind of school have you done?

We have kind of done a
mixture of homeschooling
and public school,
just kind of depending on
the season they're in and
how they're doing.

There were many years where
I was homeschooling my
younger son because he just
had a lot of social anxiety
and was not doing well around others.

But now he wants to be
challenged in school,
so he's in public school.

And my older son,
they're both in public school this year.

They're in middle school.

They get the support they need,
and they're thriving there.

But I feel like if they weren't thriving,
I'm happy to pull them out
and homeschool them.

And so we just evaluate
every year what we think is
best for them.

And then since you're used

to homeschooling,
how do you support them
even while they're in the public school?

Because I remember one time
you mentioned about how you
give them little social
challenges or things to help them.

Yeah.

So, yeah.

Yeah.

So you know how some people
like families give allowance for,
you know,
doing chores or different things.

We give them,
we bribe them with different
things for doing different challenges.

So this year, this year,
our goal is for them to make friends.

They're both pulled out for services,
but they're in the
mainstream classes for their class.

And up to now,
they really haven't had any
friends at school.

They have friends at church, but
because they have buddies at church.

But at school, they haven't had friends.

So we've told them that if

you have one conversation a
day with a classmate,
then we'll give you a dollar.

So they're like, a dollar, yay.

So they come home from
school and they tell us
like who they talk to.

And we're just trying to
challenge them to grow in their skills.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So, so far they're still motivated to,
to keep trying for the different rewards.

The dollar is very motivating to them.

Yes.

So whatever motivates your child.

Yeah.

We found that helpful because just trying,

we were just trying to

explain like why it's

important to get to know

people and have conversations and,

but we're,

but it's like a skill they have

to practice and,

and they're not going to

practice without an incentive.

And so we give them the

incentive and they're practicing it because they want that dollar.

That's good.

I'm trying to think of how that would translate because that's, you know, going back.

That's a good way to work back and forth in public school and homeschool, just giving, you know,

the challenge and then that tangible reward of some kind that ties it to.

It's kind of like a mini trophy every day.

Kind of, yeah.

You get a mini trophy every day.

And then the big one is the big trophies when you go spend it all.

Yes.

Yeah.

And then that's an opportunity.

Do you work on money skills at the same time, life skills of money management or not really?

Yeah, we're trying to work on that.

So we're hoping this will help.

We'll see how it goes.

Right now, they're just like, I want this.

And it's like, well,

how much money do you have?

How many more conversations

do you need to have?

We have people have a chance

to send in questions and we

have a question.

It's a two part question

kind of from Valerie.

So I'll give you the first

one and then we'll move

into the second one.

So since learning about your

son's special needs,

has any family member been

in denial about the

diagnosis or had problems with family?

And if you haven't experienced that,

how would you approach a

situation like this?

That's a good question.

We did have a few family

members who were like, oh,

it's just a delay or just

wait and see kind of denial.

And for a while, I'll be honest,

I did listen to them

because they had kids.

So they seem, you know,
they must know what they're
doing or talking about.

But before long, it was like,
it's pretty obvious that
there's more going on and I
needed to trust myself as their mother,
that there is something
going on and take care of it.

And so I had to like,
not worry about what family
was thinking and just focus
on what I needed to do for my kids.

Um, and.

And if grace needed to be
given to that family member
or if boundaries needed to
be established with that family member,
both are perfectly good
things to do to protect you
and your family.

That's good.

And then the second half is...
where a family member isn't
supportive of diagnosis.

Oh, a little backstory.

Oh, sorry.

This was the second half of the question.

It's not really a question.

She's a mom of two autistic boys,
ages six and two,
and grandma isn't
supportive of their special needs.

So do you have anything
additional in light of that extra story?

I don't think so.

I think it's, yeah.

I think you just have to focus on
you and what you feel like
you need to do for your kids,
not what grandma says.

So what kind of boundaries?

Because we want to make our
family happy and we want to
all get along with our family.

But ultimately,

like we are responsible for our kids,
so we need to do what's best for them.

What kind of boundaries have
you had to set with people

or have you with family members?

Like what have you told them

or how have you set those boundaries?

There have been times where

we're like going to visit

right now is just not a

good time right now, or we'll come visit,
but we can't stay in your house,
we'll get a hotel,
or just setting up those
type of boundaries so that
you still have that
relationship with them,
but you're also helping
your child who you know
might get overwhelmed in that situation,
or it may not be the
healthiest of relationships
that you don't want to be around.
all the time that you need
space from sometimes.
So that's what we've had to do.
That's really good.
I don't know if you've had
that experience at all.
Well, we, our family isn't very local.
And so we don't,
we didn't see them a lot
when the kids were growing up.
But there were probably more
church families where we
would interact with
families in the church where boundaries.
Well, also,
at one point we had a homeschool,

a homeschool co-op meeting in our house.

And it was it was only five families.

But I believe it was 12 boys

and three girls in just

these five families.

they're meeting our house

and my daughter was preschool age.

So she wasn't really in the school.

And there was another little

boy who was preschool age

and he had an older brother and sister.

So he, you know, he had siblings,

he knew how to act, but he,

for some reason,

he just started picking on

my daughter because she couldn't respond.

She couldn't talk.

She couldn't walk.

She couldn't like chase him

down or anything.

Not that she went,

she has motor planning problems,

but we had to establish boundaries there.

And we still had the co-op

and it was meeting at my house.

So I just kept her with me.

I made the mother aware of

what was going on.

And that was more like a physical thing.

But when it comes to the

other thing with people not

appreciating it, I did the same thing.

I listened to people who were saying, oh,

you should put her in public school.

They have such good services and, you know,

everything's wonderful there.

And, you know,

people who were former teachers and

you know,

after a while I finally listened

to it and I still have mixed,

mixed feelings on whether it was good.

It's probably was good in the short term,

but I wish we would have

taken her out sooner.

But, um, so in that case, you know,

the boundaries that I

needed to set were like you

were talking about that.

I don't even know if they're boundaries,

just having confidence in

yourself as a parent to, um,

make these decisions and to

pray about them.

And,

and it's hard when it's in the church

because, you know, you think, well,

they're all Christians and, you know,
God's for all of us.
He's not against us.
So how, you know,
how is this going to happen?
It's, it's kind of difficult, I think,
but I like what you said
about the boundaries and
making sure that your
interest in your kids.
Cause I know,
I think it's especially true
when it comes to discipline because
people you know in the
church especially but all
people have you know they
they discipline their kids
in one way or another and
they have they have their
way of doing it and if
they're christian they
believe they assume they're
doing it they're doing it
based on their convictions
so they believe this is the
right way but when you have
a child who has sensory
issues or mental issues or

ocd or you know all these
different things motor planning
it's very difficult to
discipline doesn't look the same,
you still have to discipline,
then you still need to
train their hearts.

But it doesn't look the same.

And when people around us, and Victoria,

I don't know if this is
what's going on with you.

But in people around us,
start to judge what we're
doing they don't think
we're doing it right even
though you know they know
us well enough like people
in the grocery store you
know they're going to judge
you you know every day to
sunday but your own family
and people who see you all the time
They, you know,
they start judging how
you're parenting when they
don't understand.

And so part of it also is
becoming an advocate for your child,
teaching others, you know,

educating other people.

But like you said, if, you know,
if they don't believe it, if they don't,
you know, if they don't believe in it,
then they, you know, it may be a while.

They just have to wait and see.

And then it's going to be, you know,
you'll have to kind of win
them without a word in some instances.

Mm-hmm.

I'd like to talk a little bit about, well,
let me go back here.

Sorry.

I'm new at this, everyone.

I'm trying to,

I'm still trying to learn
how to do some of this stuff.

I think as special needs parents,
what we really are looking
for are answers.

And I know it's impossible
to answer the question, you know,
why isn't God healing my child?

So we'll put that one aside
because we can't.

God's sovereign and that's
just the way it is in some ways.

But there are things that we can do.

And Jen,
this is actually really good
timing for this because Jen
has actually written a
second book called On the
Same Page with God.
where she talks about
praying scripture in all situations,
not just with our special needs kids.
So, you know,
we're not just special needs parents.
We're also, you know, wives or, you know,
we have spouses and we live
in a community and we have
sometimes other children
and there's just all these things.
So there's prayer.
So I'd like to kind of shift
the conversation to just
prayer in general and
how it works and how God works through it.
And if you have any examples, I know,
and you're,
I don't have a copy of her other book,
but I do,
I have read it in the editing phase.
There it is.
It's brand new out on Amazon this month,
right?

Yeah.

July 30th it came out.

Oh, okay, cool.

So it's, it's available on July 30th.

But the interesting thing to

me was when I read through the book,

There's so many books on prayer out there,

and I probably have 20 of them myself.

And so it's like, well,

why write a book on prayer

where there's so many out there?

But as I was reading this book,

it occurred to me that this

book is an important book

on prayer because it

constantly reminds you

about what it means to be

on the same page with God

instead of running off in

our own direction.

So why did you want to write

this book on prayer?

Well,

after I had that experience with my

Bible study where they

started praying scripture for me, I,

you know,

began that practice of praying scripture.

And I kept clinging to that
verse that talked about, you know,
if you have faith as small
as the mustard seed,
you can say to the mountain, moo,
and it will moo.

And I'm like,
I'm believing and I have
faith and I hope it's
bigger than a mustard seed
and no mountains are moving.

Um, and again,
I was getting discouraged
even though I'm like
praying God's word now.

And, um,
I felt like God spoke to my heart
and told me that, that yes,
sometimes he moves
mountains in our circumstances.

There are miracles, you know,
and we see God moving and providing in,
in ways that it can only be God.

But sometimes the mountains
like God moves are the
mountains that's in our
hearts or in our mindsets.

And that was such a like
huge transformational

thought for me that prayer
isn't about getting the
things that we want.

Prayer is about having our
heart aligned with God's
heart and having all those
things that he doesn't want
in our hearts and our minds
removed so that they can be
replaced with his truth and
his goodness and his love.

And so that's really what
the book is about.

It's about learning to align
our hearts with his heart
and to let go of those painful things,
the things that aren't
meant to be in our hearts.

Like for me, it was bitterness.

I had a lot of bitterness
toward God about the
special needs parenting journey.

And letting go of that
bitterness was like a huge
mountain that moved for me.

And for me that,
that having that mountain
move led me to being able

to write these two books

and to be where I'm at.

And to me, that's like,

just as miraculous as if

God had healed my children.

Like they're both miraculous.

You know what I mean?

Yeah.

Yeah.

So I know in the,

you share additional

stories about your kids and

your interactions with your husband.

And the new one,

that's very convicting

about moving the mountains

in our hearts instead of

the ones we see around us

that we want God to move in our lives.

You know, the focus, like,

start with your heart or your own heart.

It's very convicting.

It is.

It is.

And sometimes, like,

I still get discouraged.

Like,

why are these mountains in my life

not moving?

But then it's like,
he's moving things in me.
And that's pretty cool, too.

Yeah.

So who are some of your
favorite authors on prayer?

Prayer books that you didn't write?

Well,

I love Timothy Keller's book on prayer.

And Richard Foster has a book on prayer.

I'm like blanking on the whole name.

It just says prayer and
that's something about
heart something or other.

It's good.

It's good.

Paul Miller has a book
called A Praying Life that I like.

And I liked Priscilla Shire's Fervent.

That was a good book.

Yeah,

I've read a lot of books about prayer.

But those are ones I find
have helped me the most.

Okay.

Yeah,

I think I like George Mueller's
biography where he decided

he wasn't going to tell

anybody his needs.

He just prayed about them.

And God would deliver.

And that's amazing.

I think that's the hardest thing.

When it comes to praying for special needs,

anything in the special needs life,

our kids, our marriages, our husbands.

It's almost like over time we give up.

Asking because we don't see the answer,

you know, the persistent widow.

That's not.

It's how do you keep.

How do you keep.

Praying for something when

you don't have an answer.

Do you change what you're praying?

Do you try to negotiate with

God in your prayer?

Do you what happens when

when you don't get the answer right away?

For me,

I've learned to find scriptures for it,

for that idea.

Because I realized I tend to

pray the same words and the

same ideas over and over again.

So finding God's words for

it gives me not only new words,
but a new way of focusing on
on that thing and so so just
finding more scriptures to
pray um helps me continue
praying or even changing
the way that I'm praying so
like journaling versus like
going for a prayer walk or
you know just kind of keep
it fresh and and and trying
new ways of connecting with
god new prayer practices
because that can help it can help you
I don't know, just just to have that fresh,
new experiencing the power
of God and prayer in a new way.
And that kind of keeps you going.
So you have to physically
get out of your rut and
mentally not just.

Yeah,

it's like it's the whole package to
get the whole package out of the rut.
not just your prayers or whatever.

I mean,

sometimes prayer can seem boring
when we're like praying for

the same thing over and over again.

And we're like,

I've already prayed for this,

but then just finding a new

way to pray for it,

whether it's writing out scripture or,

you know, that, that I find it helps.

So do you write out any of your prayers?

I do.

I have a prayer journal and

I'll write out my prayers in it.

But I don't do it, like, every day.

Maybe, like, once or twice a week.

Yeah.

Oh, okay.

I find it helps me focus.

And then it's nice to go

back to later and to see, like,

what was I praying for?

How has God moved either in

that situation or in my

heart since I prayed that?

It's nice to have that record.

That is.

I used to... During the

90-day prayer challenge,

I kept a journal.

And it was...

amazing to see.

And God didn't answer all
the prayers at the same
time and none of them in the same way.

So it's amazing.

And sometimes I know it's,
we like to in our prayers,
tell God how we want our
prayers answered and he can
do so much more above and
beyond what we can think or imagine.

Yeah.

And here we are, you know,
suggesting for him to work
with our children.

How do you,

Think back to when you were
in the major struggle days,
like right after, you know,
after the beach experience.

So you had kind of made that
shift internally.

How did you work through all
that bitterness?

It was a lot of prayer journaling, a lot.

I felt like David,

like I was pouring out my
heart and it would include
those questions and the

anger and the frustration.
then it always ended up with
but I trust you like how
how david's songs were um I
just I had to get it out of
my heart and out of my head
and writing was the best
way for me to do that um
and it and it required a
lot of prayer and a lot of
time to process it um I did
also um some counseling
which helped as well and
sometimes we just need help
in the journey so yeah so
So that's interesting
because I know sometimes we think, well,
we have God, you know,
we kind of do the Lone
Ranger Christian thing.
But you're saying you
actually got outside help
to work through some of your stuff.
I did.
That's good to know because
that's something we forget
that there are people out
there who can help,
that we don't have to do it alone.

And sometimes you can do
that just talking to a friend.
But other times...
there are times you need a
professional to help and
just like we go and we get
help the help our kids need
sometimes we need to do
that for ourselves too I
know it's hard to do like
fit it in with all of our
kids stuff but sometimes we
do need that help yes I'm
it's yeah it's it's such a
sometimes it's such a hard
life so how do you
do you keep now after all
this time you got rid of
the bitterness how do you
keep from falling back into
the bitterness um yeah I
mean it's hard because just
over the summer my my older
son got another diagnosis
and I was I like went
through that whole cycle
again where I went through
the anger and the

bitterness and the grief and then the

Okay, acceptance and surrender.

And so it still comes like

things are gonna happen or

like I'll see my kids

interacting with other kids

and see like how far behind

they are in the night.

Comparison is the thief of joy.

And so, like,

that bitterness will start

sprouting up again.

And so then it's like, okay, for me,

I know that journaling is what helps me.

And so when I'm feeling

upset or I'm feeling bitter,

then I'll open up the

journal and I'll pour out, like,

my questions and my feelings.

And, like,

I got to get it out of my head

and heart somehow.

And so...

I know writing is what it is for you.

And so you need to figure

out how is the best for me

to share and get out these

emotions and thoughts.

And it may need to happen

every day or just whenever

you're feeling that way.

But I found that to be helpful for me.

Now, do you have any suggestions?

That's really good.

By the way, there was a woman.

who was severely abused,

ritual abuse kind of thing.

And that was how she healed

from being rescued out of that.

She healed from it was

through a journaling process.

And she talked about how

when you write it down,

it's like out of your head

and then you can evaluate

it like your mind and your brain.

They're not melded together.

She said, you know,

it's kind of weird how it works, but

It somehow the journaling

helps you process the emotion.

But then when you read it,

it's like you've separated

it from yourself and you

can deal with it.

I thought that was an

interesting concept because

I'd never heard of that or
done that before.

That's the journaling.

I find this.

I find it the same.

And I can't read it right
after I've written it though.

Like I'll read it later,
but I just have to pour it
out and be done.

And then,
then later I'll look at it like a
few days later or weeks
later or whatever.

Do you know what?

That's funny.

Cause she said the same thing.

She said,
don't read it for at least a week.

Once you write it, she said,
don't read it for at least a week.

If it's in the,
if you're in the process of
working through something.

Right.

Yeah.

Wow.

That's, that's interesting.

Cause you just naturally did that,

that you put that distance
and then you went back and
revisited that.

Mm-hmm.

What kind of advice do you have for,
we have about 10 minutes left.

So I'd like to see if you
can give us the special needs parents,
the homeschooling parents,
some insight into what things we can,
what things can we pray for?

What's an effective thing to
pray for or specific verses,
any of those things.

And we can tackle those one
at a time to do them all together.

But you can pick one of the
three and we'll start there.

Okay.

So my favorite scripture to
pray for my boys now is
actually a scripture that's

found both in the Old

Testament and the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, it's for Samuel.

And for the New Testament,
it's referring to Jesus.

And it says that he,

meaning either Samuel or Jesus,
he grew in wisdom and
stature and in favor of God and man.

And so that's something that
I try and pray for my boys,
like at least once a week.

And then I go through each
of those four things.

So I pray for each of my
kids for them to grow in wisdom.

And so in that case,
I'm focused on skills they
need to grow and things
they need to learn, you know,
life skills or academic skills, spelling,
things like that, social skills,
as well.

So that's what I focus on for wisdom.

And then,
so we grew in wisdom and stature.

So then I focus on their
physical well-being, their health,
any challenges that they're
having with their health and well-being.

And then,
so it's wisdom and stature in
favor of God.

So then I'm going to focus
on their spiritual

well-being for their faith,
for their understanding of scripture, and
I know as special needs parents,
we worry a lot about our kids.
Can they receive Christ if
they're nonverbal,
if they're intellectually delayed?
But I believe that God loves
our children even more than we do.
And he knows their hearts.
And Jesus said that we need
to have a childlike faith.
And that's what our kids have,
is a childlike faith.
If we're planting those seeds,
they have that childlike faith.
And a lot of times we think
that you need to have an
adult-like faith to be saved,
but Jesus says a child-like faith.
So I just wanted to share
that because that was very
helpful and encouraging to me.
Because, you know,
with speech delays and different things,
we worry about what they're able to do.
know or express um so anyway
pray for spiritual

well-being and then um and
their relationship with God
and then the last thing it
says um they grow in favor
of man and so in that case
I pray for their social
skills I pray for their
relationships with teachers
with therapists family
members that kind of thing
and so I can take that one
scripture and like pray for
however long for um each of
my kids and so that's my
favorite scripture to pray for them

Wow.

That is all encompassing
because you got the life skills,
you got the social skills.

It covers everything.

Spiritual, the health.

Yeah.

That's good.

And then you find verses for
each of those.

Do you like dig deeper or
just kind of just pray for those?

Um, yeah,

usually sometimes I'll find other

verses for those things,
but I'm usually just using
that scripture as my
framework and then praying
for the specific areas.

But yeah, sometimes I do find scripture,
like I have the scriptures for speech.

And so I still pray those, um,
when I'm talking about
their development or their social skills,
that kind of thing.

So.

Okay.

That's, that's good.

Do you have, um,

Do you have any advice for
parents who have kind of,
they're kind of mad at God
and they don't have like a husband to say,
go sit on the beach.

And they're just kind of, you know,
they're like at the bottom.

And I mean,

I think a lot of us have been
there multiple times, some of us.

And how, how do you get out of that?

Is there anything specific
you pray for that?

Or how do you do that?

I don't know if there's
anything specific I prayed for that.

I've just...

I've learned that I need to
make the time to process
because it's so easy to be
so busy doing all the
things for our kids and for our home.

And it's never ending that
it's so important to make
the time to like actually
process how we're really
feeling and whether it's
like going for a walk or
journaling or a bubble bath or whatever,
like we need,
it's like so essential to process.

we talk about the importance of self-care,
but we also need,
this isn't just self-care,
it's soul care.

Like we have to make time for it.

And then it's okay to pour
out that anger to God.

Like he can handle it.

He, he already knows,
but he wants to hear what's
going on in your heart.

He wants to hear it because
he cares so much about us
that he wants to know.

And he's wants to show us
that he's with us and he cares.

Um,
that it's okay to pour it all out.

Yeah.

That's good to hear.

I'm learning as we're talking.

The because the way I find
time for soul care is I
have to get up earlier than
my daughter in the morning,
because she's everyone else, you know,
will go and do their own thing.

We don't have any kids in
the house anymore.

But when she's up,
that's when the demands start.

She needs help with, you know,
getting dressed, getting food,
entertaining, you know,
being entertained and doing school,
you know, all the things.

And I have found that
ideally a good two to three
hours before she gets up.

I'm a morning person,
so it's not hard for me,
but I just have to be
disciplined to not turn on
anything and look at the
Bible first before I move into other
to other activities,
which is when I get things
done without interruption.

That's when I do a lot of things.

That's good.

You, oh, sorry.

Why don't you tell us, well,

talk about the things that

are on your website next,

because you have a freebie, right?

About praying scripture for your children.

Yeah.

All right, so if you go to my website,

embracing.life and then

slash special needs as one word,

I have near the top of the page,

it says subscribe and

you'll receive scripture

based prayers to pray as a

special needs parent.

And so it's like six pages

of scriptures to pray for

yourself and for your

special needs child.

And then I send out once a month,
I send out an email with
encouragement and resources
for your faith, special needs,
parenting journey, praying scripture,
that type of thing.

So, yeah,
that's embracing life slash
special needs.

But also on that page.

And underneath that,
there's all the blog posts
that I've written about
praying scripture for your
kids or your marriage or yourself.

Or I also have on there, like,
recommended books for
Christian special needs
parents or podcasts to listen to,
things that I've learned
along the journey.

Like, those are all there as well.

Yeah.

And I really like Jen's
website because it's a place of peace.

You don't, you know,
some websites and you're

always like researching,
you're looking for
information and you know,
you're like desperate when
you go to Jen's website,
it's like an oasis and all
the internet research that you do.

So if you're ever doing research,
you're overwhelmed, go to,
go to Jen's website and
just read some of her blog
posts because they're all,
Jen's a very encouraging person.

And so you're not gonna, you're not gonna,
feel guilty.

And like, sometimes when I read the Bible,
it should be encouraging,
but I feel guilty.

I was just reading Proverbs this morning.

I was like, you know,
just a couple of them.

So much conviction.

So, I mean,

you may get that on Jo's website,
but in general,

her words are very kind and
thoughtful and it flows out of a heart.

I believe that's, you know,
that way towards people in general.

So,
so I recommend it as an oasis of sorts
on the internet.

And then tell us about where
we can find your two books.

Okay.

So then you can talk about,
you can give like little descriptions.

Yeah.

So both of my books, Ooh, here we go.

Both my books are on Amazon.

Um,

so embracing the special life is about
the things that we need to
embrace and release in the
special needs parenting journey.

Things like God taught me about.

And then on the same page
with God talks about praying scripture.

I do share a lot of stories
as well in that one about
special needs parenting.

Cause I mean, that's my journey.

And what I've learned about
prayer and praying
scripture through that.

And at the end of every chapter,
there's scriptures to pray for that,

whatever the topic was,
whether it's praying for
your children or your
marriage or your faith or those,
all those different things in the book.
It's yeah,
it's a comprehensive book and it
has a lot of,
and it has a lot of quotes
from other books on prayer and other
ideas so it's it's kind of a
comprehensive look at
prayer but the nice thing
is the end of every chapter
jen has put sample prayers
based on scripture verses
so it's not like she talks
about it you have to go do
it yourself she actually
gets you started in the
process and once you start
thinking like that it
starts to come more and
more natural and especially
if you've read through the
bible or you're doing any
kind of bible reading
program you can work those in there too
God is for us.

He wants us to be on the
same page with him.

And he wants our kids to thrive.

He wants us to thrive as
special needs parents and
as homeschoolers and just
as human beings reflecting his glory.

And it doesn't seem like
that happens a lot, I think,
in the special needs life.

But I believe that prayer is
an important part of that
thriving process.

know getting that thriving
lifestyle so this is it for

this week thank you jen

very much uh tune in next

week we have a new show

every week and we now we

have several co-hosts we

have you know rotation of

co-hosts so you'll see some

other people and don't

forget to check out jen's

information and the links

that she mentioned will be

down in the show notes when we post it

We are happy to, at Sped Homeschool,

we're happy to serve the
homeschooling community.

And I hope this has been a
great encouragement for you.

We'll see you next week.

This has been Empowering
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