

Disability Resource Manual: **A Practical Guide for Churches and Church Leaders**

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Abstract: This guide includes definitions of different disabilities, suggestions for relating to that person, and accommodations that can be made within the church. It also provides information for starting a disability ministry, providing care, the theology of disability, and the spirituality of disability. Included is an annotated resource list.
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*These resources by Dr. Rev. Nancy Lane can be found at
<http://thechp.syr.edu/handouts.html>



Introduction

This project is a work in progress. My hope is to keep adding to this as I gain more and wider experiences. My purpose for this project is to create a beginning resource for Churches. This resource provides basic information for many different aspects of integrating all people into the church as well as some resources for where to look for more information. I did not cover all the disabilities by any means, but I hope to have covered at least most of the major categories.

This book includes things that I have learned over the past five years in my education courses and my time spent with people with disabilities. In the summer of 2005 I was able to spend a summer in Romania working among children and adults with disabilities. I was a camp counselor for individuals with disabilities during the summer of 2006. Other things I have learned through my conversations with friends and families who have experience with disability, and through the people who were willing to mentor me and provide me with resources.

Please enjoy and be challenged by this book.

Thank you,
Ashley Peterson

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General Tips and Accommodations

- Talk with the person with disabilities and with the family for the best ideas on how to fully accommodate that person. They know best!

- Be sure to keep the confidentiality of the person, especially in public prayer. Ask the individual for permission to openly pray for him or her.

- Have scent free sections in your sanctuary. This can help people with asthma, emphysema, or others who are very sensitive to smell.

- Make sure there is appropriate lighting where your church meets.

- Always have some sort of snack or juice available especially for someone who has diabetes.

- Have accessible bathrooms, parking spots, and drinking fountains.

- Have a few volunteers who would be willing to provide transportation to and from the services and other church events.

- Provide a person who is willing to take notes for others.

- Churches are great at multi-sensory worship. This is great for all people since all people learn and experience God in different ways.

- Some disabilities cause the person to have difficulty following rules or exhibiting correct behavior (for example, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). Be aware of this, but do not let this behavior reach the point where it endangers anyone - including themselves. There are many behavioral modification techniques. In general, talk to the person's family and see what strategies work the best for them. *See Appendix D: Tips for Preventing Negative Behavior



Autism, Aspergers, and other PDDs

(also includes accommodations for Sensory Integration Dysfunction)



What is it?

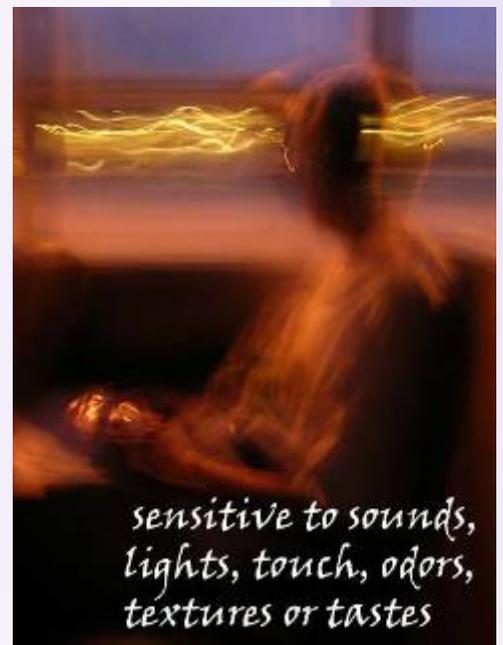
Autism is a neurological disorder. It affects each person differently and to different degrees. Individuals with autism can also be diagnosed with other disorders or disabilities. The cause of Autism is still unknown and heavily debated. In 2007 it is estimated that 1 out of every 150 babies are born with Autism.

Other things included in the Autism spectrum:

- Asperger Syndrome: Much like mild autism, but usually without significant delays in cognition or language
- Rett's Disorder: Normal development until five months to four years, followed by regression and mental retardation
- Childhood disintegrative disorder: Normal development for at least 2 years and up to 10 years, followed by significant loss in skill
- Pervasive development disorder (PDD) not otherwise specified: Pervasive delay in development that does not fit into any other diagnostic category

Characteristics: Remember! Each person is different. They may only have 2 or 3 of these characteristics.

- Socially awkward and clumsy in relations with other children and adults
- Naïve or gullible
- Often unaware of others feelings
- Easily upset by changes in routines and transitions
- Takes everything very literally
- Can be overly sensitive to sounds, lights, touch, odors, textures, tastes (even barely perceptible ones!)



- Can be under sensitive to sounds, lights, touch, odors, textures, tastes. For example, if one was under sensitive to touch, they may be likely to bang their head or hit themselves so that they can actually feel something.
- Physically awkward in sports
- Echolalia: Repeating words or phrases, normally shortly after they have heard them.
- Unusually accurate memory for details
- Sleeping or eating problems
- Trouble in understanding things they have heard or read
- Inappropriate body language or facial expression
- Unusual speech patterns
- Formal manner of speaking
- Unusually loud, high, or monotone voice
- Tendency to rock, fidget, or pace while concentrating
- Flapping the arms up and down

Accommodations:

- **Limit** the use of **idiomatic language** unless you know from pervious experiences that the person will understand. Most individuals on the spectrum take language very literally. Example: "It's raining cats and dogs."
- Create a **predictable** environment built on consistent **routines**. Have a bulletin that is easy to follow along for adults in the service. For children in Sunday School, place a schedule in a visible spot of what the class will be doing that day. Clearly mark when it is time to move on to the next task. **Warn** the person if there is going to be a **big change** within the service.
- In Sunday School, encourage **social interaction**. Everybody can learn and benefit from this interaction. Students with autism have a safe place where they can play and interact with their peers. Students without autism can learn that they have more in common than what they thought.



- For adults with autism in the church, **social coffee time** after church can be a **nightmare**. They can be overloaded with stimuli. The smell of the coffee, the voices of everyone talking at once, the bright colors of everyone's clothes. They may simply want to leave, or hide in the corner chair. Have a member of your church go up and individually talk to them. This allows the person to **focus on just one voice** in order to block out all the other stimuli, and let them know that **they are wanted** at the church.
- If the person has **sensory issues** (over sensitive or under sensitive) here are a few things that you could try: A weighted vest, brushes or massagers, rhythmically patting the person on the back, stress balls, oddly textures objects, and more. Try changing the lighting as florescent lights can be harsh and produce humming noises. Have scent free sections for those overly sensitive to smell. Remember to ask the person or their parent/guardian what will work best for the person in question.
- **TEACCH** (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children) Method:

The TEACCH program is focused around the strengths of those with autism. This method discovers what the person is most interested in and uses those interests to teach the new concepts. This helps the person to pay attention and have increased motivation. Many individuals with autism have strengths within visual skills, recognizing details, and memory. **Focusing on these strengths** can also help the person to succeed at learning.

For more information: <http://www.teacch.com>
<http://www.cureautismnow.org>

See Appendix C: Tips for Preventing Negative Behavior



Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



What is it?

ADD/ADHD is a neurological condition that affects learning and occurs in approximately 5-10% of the population. ADD/ADHD can be found in adults as well as children. A person with ADD will usually only display the inattentive characteristics, while a person with ADHD will show both the inattentive and hyperactive characteristics.

Characteristics:

- Very limited attention span
- Impulsive behaviors
- Hyperactivity
- Mood swings
- Low frustration tolerance
- Trouble falling asleep at night
- Procrastinates

Signs of Inattention:

- Does not notice details or makes careless mistakes
- Has a hard time paying attention
- Does not seem to pay attention in conversations
- Difficulty following instructions
- Loses things needed to complete a task

Signs of Hyperactivity:

- Always fidgeting with something
- Feels restless or that they have to get up and move
- Difficulty playing quietly
- Talks consistently

Adaptations

- When in Sunday School, or in a small group setting, **give the person time** before they are expected to answer or speak.



- **Understand** when someone leaves the service for a few minutes in order to come back refocused. (Most adults know when they are reaching their breaking point, and when they need to step out.)
- Provide bright lighting in meeting areas. If possible, use natural lighting. **Florescent lighting can have a negative affect on many people.**
- Break up long components of the service. For example, use music, fellowship, drama, corporate prayer, and more to **reduce the time one is only listening while sitting in their seat.**
- **Have paper, pencils, crayons, clay** or other items available that the individual can use to help them focus.
- Provide **outlines** of the lesson or service.
- Have **white noise** in the background during silent periods like prayer. This could be a fan running in the background, very faint static in the speakers, or the heater humming.
- **Music can be distracting** as a background noise. Use your judgment to decide whether music should be used **during the sermon or prayers.**



Blind or Visually Impaired



What is it?

Legally blind is defined as having an acuity of 20/200 in the best eye even with correction (Normal acuity is 20/20), or having side vision less than 20 degrees. Some people who are legally blind may still be able to see! Low vision is classified as having 20/70 acuity.

Accommodations:

- **Identify yourself** before you make physical contact with a person who is blind. Tell your name and position, and make sure the individual is introduced not excluded. **Introduce** any people who are with you.
- If a new congregant has a visual impairment give them a **tour** of the church.
- People who are blind need their arms for balance. Therefore, do not just take the person's arm, but instead **offer your arm** to the person for assistance.
- **Guide Dog Tips:** Walk opposite of guide dog, do not pet the guide dog, and provide space for a guide dog to sit during the service.
- If you have to leave a person who is blind, **give them directions to the exit**. Make sure that they know you are leaving and try to leave them in an area they know. When giving directions, **give specific non-visual directions**.
- Feel comfortable using idiomatic expressions, like "See you later."
- **Only 10%** of the visually impaired population **reads Braille**, so make vocal transitions that they will be able to follow. Example: Instead of "We will now sing Hymn 373" say "We will now sing Old Rugged Cross". If necessary, provide Braille items as well.
- For those who have limited use of their sight, but are still able to read, provide **enlarged** versions of the texts being used in the service (at least 16 pt font, or copy something from 8.5x11 to 11x17).



- Text reading software for the computer is available.
- Provide for **books on tape**, especially the Bible! Also, have a copy of the sermon available on tape so the person can listen to it again.
- Ensure that there is **good lighting**.
- **While guiding** a person, point out rough spots on the ground, inclines, change in textures, the amount of stairs, or location of doors.
- When **leading a person to their seat** put their hand on the back of the seats so they know where to sit.
- **Provide transportation** to and from church events and services.

Techniques for Leading the Blind:



In this first method the seeing person is slightly ahead of the other person to their non-dominant side freeing the other person's dominant hand for other uses. The seeing person offers their elbow for the person who cannot see.

This second method is used when going through doors or other narrow passages. The seeing person crosses their hand behind their back. The person who cannot see takes that hand. This allows the two to go single file and still maintain a way to keep each other safe from obstacles.



Resources: <http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/lowvision.html>



Deaf or Hard of Hearing



What is it?

Average person	begins to hear at	0 decibels (dB)
Mildly hard of hearing	beings to hear at	26-54 dB
Moderately hard of hearing	begins to hear at	55-69 dB
Severely hard of hearing	begins to hear at	70-89 dB
Profoundly Deaf	begins to hear at	90 dB or above

Deafness and hard of hearing are no longer considered a disability by many groups of people. In fact there are now deaf communities and a **deaf culture**. There are some people who are deaf who would not want to be able to hear if given the chance.

Babies who are born deaf may be able to receive a **cochlear implant** or have an operation that will allow them to gain much of their hearing. However, parents who are deaf that have a baby born deaf may **choose not to have this operation** done. This is their decision and it is not the place of anyone to try and tell them that one culture is better than another (i.e. the hearing culture is better than the deaf culture).

Not all people who are deaf can read lips; those who can usually use the mouth *and* face to interpret what is being said. This is called speech reading. Even then, sometimes only 30% of what is said is actually understood, so stop periodically to be sure the person understands.



Accommodations in services:

- Provide an **Assisted Listening Device (ALD)**. Check out www.hearinglossweb.com/res/ald/ald.htm for suggestions about purchasing an ALD system for your church.
- Provide real-time **captioning** on any PowerPoint or projection used.
- Have a **space reserved** for a person to easily see the speaker's lips and facial expressions.
- Provide an interpreter who knows **sign language**. Sign language, just like speaking English has different dialects in different parts of the country. For an example, consider how people from Texas talk differently from people in Minnesota.
- Invite the person to **participate** in the service and interpret for them.
- Sometimes it helps if they have a **sermon outline** so they can more easily follow the sermon.
- Make sure the interpreter can always **be seen**, even if the lights are dimmed for the service.



Tips for talking with someone who is deaf:

- To get the person's attention, it is acceptable to touch them on the arm.
- Ask the person how they prefer to communicate.
- If there is an interpreter, do not focus on the interpreter. Instead focus on the person.
- If there is no interpreter, find ways to communicate. You may want to write, draw, gesture, use a computer, or more.
- Make eye contact and speak slowly.
- When in a group, have only one person speak at a time.



- Make sure you are not in front of a window making it hard for the person to see your face.
- If the person can speech read, do not chew gum, drink, and keep hands away from the face so the person can see your face clearly.
- Moustaches, accents, and head movements can interfere with the person's ability to speech read.
- Shouting, generally, will not help. It can distort the sound and change the shape of the mouth.
- Instead of repeating, try rephrasing.
- Learn some basic sign language. Even if you only learn the letters, you can still communicate by spelling out what you want to say.*

Communicating by Telephone:

Many people who are deaf have TDD or telecommunication devices for the deaf.

This allows them to type their message. This can go to a relay station in each state so that a person with TDD can talk to someone without TDD and vice versa. Many businesses now own their own teletypewriter so that a relay station does not need to be used making communication easier.

*See Appendix B: Sign Language Letters



Dementia



What is it?

A progressive condition that kills brain cells and reduces mental function. The most common form of Dementia is Alzheimer's in people over 65 years old.

There is no cure although treatments can help the symptoms.

Characteristics:

- Forgetfulness (particularly short-term memory)
- Problems finding the right words
- Impaired judgment
- Personality and behavior changes (often includes anger)
- Difficulty with numbers and abstract concepts
- Loss of interest in activities
- Confusion about the time
- Unpredictable
- Cannot carry out daily activities
- Suspicious
- Anxious
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Wandering
- Later Stages: Difficulty with speech, walking, swallowing, or using the bathroom

Accommodations:

- Be respectful. If you are asked the same question over and over, answer it respectfully or redirect the person to a new subject.
- Do not feel bad if the person is unable to remember you.
- As the stages of dementia progress, the person will be unable to take care of themselves. Make sure the person has someone or some place to take care of them.
- Support the family. This can be a very difficult time for them. Have a church member be with the person with dementia to give the family a break.
- If the person is in early stages of dementia, be aware of any declining abilities and ensure that they remain safe. For example, if the person is beginning to have difficulty driving, offer them a ride home and make arrangements to get the person to the church in the future.
- If the person wanders, make sure there is someone keeping an eye on the person.



Down Syndrome



What is it?

Down syndrome is caused by an additional copy of the 21st chromosome.

Physical Characteristics: (may have only a few, or all)

- Eyelids slant upwards
- Tongue protrudes due to smaller mouth
- Short broad hands with single vertical line (most people have 2)
- Short stature
- Very flexible joints
- Small feet
- Small nose

Other Characteristics: (again may have none, a few, or all)

- Mental retardation
- Slow motor skills
- Impaired language ability especially with grammar
- Hearing and vision problems
- Heart problems
- Difficulty interpreting facial emotions

Adaptations:

- Allow for opportunities to have hands on or concrete materials.
- Use real life and other concrete examples to explain concepts.
- Try to remove distractions in the room.
- Use repetition and patterns. Songs are great!
- Encourage them to participate in the service.
- Have large print programs as many individuals with Down Syndrome have vision problems.



Emotional Disabilities



Emotional disabilities are treatable with combinations of medications and therapy. Although all people may display some of these symptoms at one time or another (i.e. anxiety or depression), they only are classified as a disability or mental illness when it is prolonged or disabling.

A person with an emotional disability may be more susceptible to depression, suicidal feelings, and/or abuse of alcohol or drugs. Please see Appendix D: Suicide: What to Look For and What to Do

Types of emotional disabilities:

- **Depression:** Prolonged feelings (for at least a few weeks) of hopelessness or feeling down.

Characteristics of Depression

- Sad, anxious, feels hopeless, guilty, worthless, helpless, or pessimistic
 - Loses interest
 - Less energy
 - Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
 - Restless or irritable
 - Sleeping too much or inability to sleep
 - Appetite or weight changes
 - Chronic pain
 - Thoughts of suicide or attempts
- **Oppositional Defiance Disorder:** Recurring behaviors including defiance, arguing, deliberately annoying others, and being spiteful especially toward authority figures.



- **Eating Disorders:** Unhealthy eating patterns including not eating enough (anorexia) or overeating with use of vomiting, laxatives, or fasting (bulimia). This is a real mental illness requiring professional help. Characterized by extreme concern about body image and size.
- **Anxiety Disorders:**
 - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Obsessive fears or anxiety causing compulsions to perform rituals to control these anxieties.
 - Panic Disorder: Sudden attacks of fear characterized by increased heart rate, sweating, dizziness, feeling faint, feeling chilled, nausea, and feeling smothered. Sometimes the person may feel like they are dying or having a heart attack. Can occur at any time.
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Characterized by loss of interest, irritability, aggressiveness and/or flashbacks. Symptoms usually begin within 3 months of the incident.
 - Social Anxiety Disorder: Excessive or unreasonable fears in everyday social situations. Sometimes it interferes with ordinary activities.
 - Phobias: Overwhelming irrational fear of something. Can cause a panic attack or anxiety
- **Borderline Personality Disorder:** Characterized by unstable or changing behavior, relationships, and self-image and impulsive behaviors.
- **Bipolar Disorder (manic depression):** Brain disorder that causes shifts in a person's mood energy and ability to function. The person goes from being in an overly good mood (manic) to extreme depression. Characteristics of manic behavior: Increased energy, restlessness, aggressive, irritable, talks fast, poor concentration, needs less sleep, poor judgment, spending sprees.
- **Schizophrenia:** Manifests in males in their late teens to early twenties and females in their twenties to early thirties. Characterized by delusions, hallucinations (including all senses), incomprehensible speech, catatonic movements including rigidity and flexibility, and lacking emotion, energy, interest, speaking ability, social skills, concentration, memory, and more.



As a church leader, you may be called upon to counsel people within the church. Be supportive and nonjudgmental at all times. Do not hesitate to refer the person to a mental health professional or to a professional counselor who has experience working with individuals with mental health problems. If the person is a danger to themselves or to others do not hesitate calling 911.

Remember to keep conversations confidential. Confidentiality is the law when dealing with people with mental illnesses. Be especially careful in public prayer. Prayer is necessary and important, but if it reveals things about a person that they wish to remain confidential it can turn into gossip. Always ask the individual before publicly praying for them. If you are in doubt, pray for the person in your private prayers.



See Appendix C: Tips for Preventing Negative Behavior
Appendix D: Suicide: What to Look For and What to Do

Resources: <http://www.schizophrenia.com/diag.html#common>
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>



Epilepsy



What is it?

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that is caused when there is an electrical disruption in the brain. This can cause convulsions, a loss of consciousness, staring spells, or a disruption of the persons senses. Sometimes it is difficult to tell when a person is having a seizure as they only appear to be staring off into space. Seizures often last from a few seconds to several minutes.

Common Causes:

Heat, lack of oxygen, low blood sugar, infections, trauma, unknown, and reaction to light or other stimuli

As a church, you must be careful to ensure that the lighting will not be prone to cause seizures. **Strobe lights and other blinking lights** are types that can cause seizures. Also **videos** can cause seizures as well. Give a little warning before you use these things.

Instructions for a convulsion seizure (Grand Mal):

- Do not panic
- Time the seizure
- Loosen clothing around neck
- Remove objects nearby that can cause injury
- DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN THE MOUTH
- Do not restrain the person; instead just make sure they remain safe
- Cushion the head
- Turn person to their side
- Stay away until the seizure ends



When to Call the Hospital:

- The person has no history of epilepsy (check for a medical ID)
- The seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
- The seizure caused another injury (i.e. head injury)
- The person is pregnant
- There is a second seizure
- The person has difficulty breathing after the seizure ends
- The person recovers from the seizure slowly

When the seizure ends:

- If in the unlikely event that a person does not start breathing again after the seizure is over, immediately start CPR and call for an ambulance.
- Offer help, but allow the person room.
- Ensure that the person can get home safely.



Learning Disabilities



What is it?

A learning disability is when a person has an above average IQ, but is unable to perform at that level. For example, a person may be very intelligent, but unable to read. When this happens something is interfering with the person's ability to take in information.

A person can have a learning disability in the following areas:

- Reading
- Writing
- Talking
- Math
- Attention
- Memory
- Cognition
- Social Skills
- Motivation

Depending on their specific area of difficulty, different adaptations must be made. Here are some suggestions:

- Do not force the person to read or write if they choose not to. Ask them if they would like to read out loud.
- If a person has difficulty reading or understanding directions, give the information to them in a different format. Some possibilities are verbally, by demonstration, or repetition.
- Have Bibles bookmarked or have scripture pre copied so that the person can still follow along in the scripture reading.
- Try to minimize any distractions.
- Make sure that any printed material is clearly typed with spaces between the lines.



- Do not obscure the text by having a picture in the background.
- Put text in a bulleted format.
- Do not use overly glossy paper or colored paper (other than light pastels).
- Use an easy to read font like Arial.
- Have a bulletin or a schedule of the service so the person knows what to expect.
- Allow the person to participate in the service. Some examples are choosing the music, giving devotions, or holding pictures or the scriptures.
- Tell the person the main points of the sermon before it begins.
- Simplify the information, but do not water it down.
- If the person is an adult, treat them as an adult. If the person is a child, treat them as a child.
- Use learning aids and repetition.
- Break the lesson or sermons into sections and help the person work through it. As the person starts to understand the concepts, gradually offer less and less assistance until the person understands it fully by themselves.
- Record the sermon or the Sunday school to listen to later.
- Use hands on activities and group discussion. Also allow the person extra time to process information. Be patient!
- Provide outline or notes of the service or class.
- Make instructions clear.
- Use repetitive songs.



Multiple Sclerosis



What is it?

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a disease where the central nervous system is inflamed causing damage to the myelin sheath or insulation around the nerves in the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. This leaves scars on the nerves preventing the conduction of nerve signals or causing them to go very slowly.

Diagnosis:

Individuals are generally diagnosed between the ages of twenty and forty. Women are two to three times more likely to develop MS than men. MS is more common in those of European descent, especially Northern European. Each person can have different characteristics of MS, some which are progressive.

Symptoms:

Common 'invisible' symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Weakness
- Cognitive problems, memory loss
- Blurred vision
- Numbness
- Prickly or tingling sensations
- Heat sensitivity
- Dizziness
- Bladder or bowel problems
- Depression
- Sexual Dysfunction



Visible Symptoms:

- Dizziness and vertigo
- Difficulty in Walking
- Muscles Spasms

Adaptations: Look at Physical Disabilities

Resources: www.mswatch.com
www.nationalmssociety.org



Muscular Dystrophy



What is it?

Muscular Dystrophy (MD) is an inherited disorder characterized by progressive muscle weakness. A person with MS will gradually lose the ability to use some or all of their muscles. It could also cause death.

Duchenne is the most common form of MD. It is diagnosed around the ages of 3-5, usually in boys. By age 12, most are unable to walk and most die in their teens or early twenties. Other forms of MD appear at different ages and can affect different areas of the body. They can progress slowly or rapidly. Currently there is no cure or effective treatment of Muscular Dystrophy.



Adaptations: Look at Physical Disabilities

Resources: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/muscular dystrophy.html#cat1
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/md/md.htm



Physical Disabilities



What is it?

There are many different kinds of physical disabilities from a **temporary** broken leg, to **progressive** degenerative diseases, to a disability that someone has had **since birth**.

Most people with physical disabilities have completely **normal intelligence**. A person who broke their leg is still the same person. Some people may have physical disabilities that make it very difficult for them to speak. Do not make the mistake of thinking that a person's ability to speak reflects their intelligence! A few people with physical disabilities may also have a disability that affects their intelligence.

Sometimes people who use wheelchairs feel that people see them as having less value and that people are afraid to speak to them.



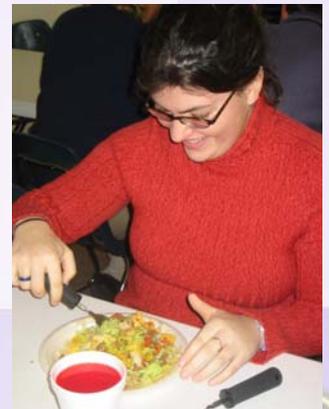
It is **natural to be a little afraid** of something that is different from us. However, once you truly **get to know** a person, you find commonalities and **lose the fear** of the different as you start to see how you are the same. Remember that physically disabilities are not contagious.



For technical specifications for accessibility according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), go to <http://www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/final.htm> or for specific information on church technical specifications go to <http://www.rrf.org/noteworthy/AccessibleFaith-final.pdf>

Accommodations:

- **Fully include** this person in the services.
- Have seats that are **wheelchair accessible** with a spot for a friend who does not use a wheel chair nearby. Do not put all the wheelchair users in the same place. Provide **accessible restrooms** with lowered towel dispensers, sinks, and water fountains. Make sure that floor is not too slick.
- Provide **arms rests** on a few of the seats in the sanctuary allowing people to be able to get up and down easier. Make sure there are seats with lots of **leg room** for those who need it (i.e. they have a cast on their leg, etc).
- **Ramps or elevators** allowing everyone to access all parts of the building. All steps should have a **hand rail** even if it is just one step. Have **electronic doors** to assist anyone who has difficulty opening doors.
- Have **printed copies** of anything projected so that a person can still see if their sight is obstructed.
- When talking with someone in a wheelchair, **sit or bend** down to their level. **Ask permission** to touch or push a person's wheelchair. It is their personal space. You may ask if they need help.
- **Do not underestimate** what the person can do. People in wheelchairs can still go swimming, skiing, and much more!
- **Adapt pencils, silverware, and similar items** so that they are easy to grip, especially for somebody with arthritis. Placing pipe insulation around the object is a great temporary solution. This picture shows silverware that is easy to grip.



Speech and Communication Disorders



Speech Disorders: What are they?

Speech disorders affect a person's ability to speak. This can be caused by many different things including brain trauma, physical disability of the face, neurological disorders, psychological issues, and more. This also includes stuttering.

This person may be self-conscious about speaking. They could possibly have social anxiety, difficulty with self-esteem, and inappropriate social behavior.

When speaking with a person with a speech disorder:

- Make eye contact: do not focus on the person's mouth.
- Take the time to listen.
- Give the person the time they need to talk.
- Allow the person to finish their sentences, don't interrupt!
- Tell the person when you cannot understand them.
- Speak to the person normally; they may have trouble speaking but they can usually understand just fine.
- Summarize what they said to ensure that you understood completely.
- Give the person opportunities to use their language skills.
- Ask few but open ended questions that allow the person to be open in their response and to be able to give explanations.

Suggestions when you are unable to understand

- Find a quiet place to talk
- Ask for a keyword to get a context
- Find a friend who has practice understanding
- Have the person write it down if they are able
- Try again later if it is not urgent





Communication Disorders

A communication disorder is a problem with either speech, which we have already discussed, or a difficulty comprehending or receiving language. Communication disorders could include dyslexia and other learning disabilities which will be discussed in the “learning disabilities” section

A person with a communication disorder may not understand instructions. When this happens find another way to relate the instructions to the person such as giving written instructions, a demonstration, or restating it in a different way.

Each person is different so it is important that you talk to them to find out what works the best.

Adaptations:

- The person may wish to have a bulleted outline of the sermon, receive recording of the sermon, have a discussion group to talk about what was said, or receive information about what is going to be said beforehand.
- Give this person the opportunity to ask questions.
- Make sure the person is in a place where he or she can see your facial expressions in able to use these clues to help understand what is being said.



Tourette Syndrome



What is it?

When most people think of Tourette Syndrome, they think of a person who swears uncontrollably. Although this can be a part of Tourette syndrome, it does not have to be.

Tourette syndrome affects a person's nerves causing 'tics.' Tics are repeated uncontrollable movements, noises, or phrases.

Most common in Tourette syndrome is the **eye tic**. This is characterized by a hard blink which almost looks like a person has something stuck in their eye. Tics could also be in the form of grunts, words, or short phrases. A few people with this syndrome may start swearing uncontrollably.

Remember:

It is important to remember that these 'tics' are uncontrollable. They happen more often when a person is agitated. Also the more a person tries to resist tics, the more urgent and frequent the tics become.

What to do if a person has Tourette syndrome in you church:

- With the permission of the individual who has tourette's or their family, educate others in the church about Tourette's.
- Have a room available which one can still hear or see what is going on in the service that the person can choose to go to when their tics are bad.
- Ignore the tics.
- Music can often reduce the amount of tics so it might be a good idea to have music periodically throughout the whole service.
- Be accepting and loving.



Children with Tourette Syndrome: Sunday School Class

- Ignore the tics, and never punish them.
- Allow the child to have a permanent pass to use at their discretion out of the classroom to get tics under control.
- Let the child to choose whether or not to read out loud. Tics can make it very difficult to read.
- Help the child's classmates understand tics and help them to be accepting.
- Breaking lesson into smaller sections and teach in a variety of different ways.*

*See Appendix A: How to teach in different ways



Person First Language

Consider these statements:

“Juan suffers from epilepsy.”

“Kyle is a victim of a stroke.”

“Dan goes to school with normal students.”

“Rodica struggles to have a normal life after she became paralyzed.”

“Linda is disabled.”

Have you ever said or heard anything like this before? I know I have. Each one of these statements is **negative, stereotypical, and/or offensive!**

Why are these unacceptable? Some of these emphasize the person’s disability rather than the individual. Others use outdated terms that have negative connotations. One example of this is the word “handicapped” referring to the days when some people with disabilities had to beg with their cap in their hand. Others stress the suffering or the struggle of a person which may not be true at all. Lastly, some of these refer to people without disabilities as normal implying that the person with a disability is abnormal.

The language we use commonly reflects our beliefs and thoughts. Therefore, we must be important in how we address those around us. The most important thing to remember when referring to people with disabilities is to recognize the person and the humanity of the individual.



Unacceptable Words or Phrases	Reason	Acceptable Phrase
Wheelchair Bound Confined to a Wheelchair	The wheelchair gives freedom, movement, and more independence to a person who can not walk	Wheelchair User
He/She is disabled He/She is Autistic	This phrase defines the person by their disability. The person is so much more than just this one aspect of their life.	A person with a disability, or a person with _____.
Handicapped Crippled	These are outdated terms which have negative connotations.	A person with a physical disability
Retarded	Although this term is still being used in medical contexts (mentally retarded), it is best avoided as it can be very offensive. Especially when some call others "retarded" for some of their actions.	Cognitive Disability Mentally Retarded Intellectual Disability
Deaf and Dumb Deaf-mute	A person is not dumb just because they are deaf. Also even if they do not use words to speak, there are many other forms of communication.	Deaf Hard of Hearing
Midget Dwarf	This term could be offensive.	Little Person Short Stature
Brain Damaged	This term could be offensive.	Brain Injury
Normal, Healthy, Typical Children	This assumes that children with disabilities are abnormal, unhealthy, or atypical	Children without disabilities
_____	This term is a little different because it is no longer seen as a disability. Instead it is a culture. It should be capitalized	Deaf
All people with disabilities are courageous or brave	Not everyone with a disability has these characteristics	Describe the person by who they are
Handicapped Restroom or Parking	This phrase uses outdated language.	Accessible Restroom or Parking

Leviticus 19:14

“Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.



The Biggest Barrier

Most people agree people with disabilities feel **unwelcome in churches** because of the **attitudes** and views held by many Christians. Although physical accessibility is necessary to be a fully inclusive congregation, it is the attitudes of people that determine whether a person will feel welcomed into the community.

“People with disabilities are not only physically excluded but we are **psychologically and spiritually alienated** from participation in the fullness of life in the faith community. The ramp may get you into a building but there is no point in being there if you are not welcome and included” (Lane, 9).

Christians have held many views, many **unconscious views**, towards people with disabilities that have been very damaging. These views or attitudes take away the humanity of the person with a disability. It is a form of **spiritual abuse**.

These views can cause much pain to a person with disabilities. Too often, those with disabilities start to believe these things themselves and “decide that disability, loss, and grief invalidate any possibility of belief in God” (Lane, 14).

The most common views found within the church are shown on the next page. Many times these may be unconscious attitudes; however, unconscious attitudes are just as destructive.



1. The person is being punished for their sins or for the sins of their parents. Jesus' disciples displayed this attitude in John 9

2. The person's faith and character is being tested by God in order for Him to show his power. This idea comes from Job 1-2, Exodus 4:11, and 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

3. The person lacks the faith to be healed. This belief comes from Mark 10:52 and Acts 14:8-10 where a person was healed because of his faith.

4. The person is possessed by a demon like in Mark 5. One man with epilepsy tells his struggle with the passage in Mark 5 about a demon possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes.

“Either Jesus had got it wrong and these people just had epilepsy, in which case if he got that wrong he could have been wrong about the rest (i.e. salvation). If he got it right and these people were demon-possessed then were all people with epilepsy demon possessed?” (McCloughry, 61).

5. The person is incapable of doing wrong. This view takes away the humanity of the person with the disability. Most people are still able to see right from wrong most of the time even if they have mental retardation. When we take away the humanity of a person, their ability to make mistakes, we take away their ability to grow closer to God, and to struggle in life.

*This list is adapted from Black, McCloughry, and Block

“Whenever we romanticize retardation, demonize a child with an emotional disability or flatly deny the spiritual needs of those who are disabled, we compromise or denigrate the humanity of that individual” (Webb, 49).

For more discussion on some of these Bible passages, look in the section "The Difference between being Healed and being Cured."



How do we overcome this barrier?

See the **person first**. Discover who that person is and strive to see God within them. Dr. Rev. Nancy Lane who strives to make sure that all people are included suggests to see God first in the person, then see the person. Once you are able to see the person, you will be able to stop focusing on the disability.

Recognize your fears. Humans commonly fear things that are different from themselves or that they do not understand. What are your fears and concerns? **Pray about these things.** Have others pray for you about these things. Our attitudes and beliefs do not always change over night. **Learn more** about different disabilities and the things you do not understand.

Love and listen to the person.

John 9:3

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, **“but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.**



How do I talk with someone with a disability?

Start with Hello. Do not focus on what they cannot do. Instead see God in the person. Try to see the person as God does. Once you are able to see the person as a person, conversation will come just as naturally as it does in any other situation. Remember this person is made in the Image of God. They have gifts and talents just like everyone else.

Genesis 1:27

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”



We don't have anyone with a disability in our church.



Do you truly have nobody with a disability in your church body?

Remember, **most disabilities**

can not be seen. Could

someone in your church have

difficulty reading? What about

the elderly in your church, do

some of them have trouble hearing or seeing well? Could that person who is unable to sit still have Attention Deficit Disorder?

It is true that many people with more noticeable disabilities are not often found in church. **Why is that?** Do they not feel comfortable? Can they enter the building? Is there someone to welcome them? Is there a way they can understand the sermon?

There are people in your surrounding communities with disabilities. Look at statistics of people with disabilities in your neighborhood. In almost every neighborhood there is someone with some sort of disability. How are you as a church supporting these people? If 'they' are not in your church already, how can you get 'them' in your church so that 'they' become a 'we?'



Starting a Ministry

Before you start any ministry pray about it! Ask others to pray about it. Make sure it is within God's will and timing.

In starting any ministry within the church, it is essential to have a **core group of leaders**. If you are the sole leader, the ministry will only grow as large as you can handle. A core group is the first to get on board with a new idea, they can share in the passion, and they can help in the planning and the carrying out of the ministry.

There are two ways to go about **getting volunteers for your core group**. The first is to individually go up and ask those who you know have a heart for the disabled and ask them if they would be interested in joining your core group. This lets the person know that you see their desire and passion, and you consider them to have leadership ability. This can be a huge self confidence booster. Allow the person to have time to think it over, and the option to say no. Someone who is pressured into volunteering his or her time is not going to be as enthusiastic. The other possible way to recruit volunteers for your core group is by making a brief announcement in your church. There might be individuals who have great enthusiasm and deeply care about helping to meet the needs of the disabled, but you are simply unaware. This gives them the opportunity to join the core group and to use their gifts.

Plan your first meeting well. The people here are volunteering their time for a cause that they believe in, do not kill their energy and support by being unsure of what to say. **PLAN AHEAD!**



Whether you are starting a ministry that is going to visit different places, or are trying to raise funds to build an elevator to make your building accessible it is important to have the **support of the church** behind you. Your ideas must be clear in order to invoke the support of others.

Have your core group come up with a **vision statement**. If someone joins the team later, make sure that the new person knows the vision statement as well. Your vision statement should answer the question what are you trying to do. Your next step in setting up objectives should answer the question how are you going to reach that goal.

Once your core group has figured this out you can open up the ministry to the whole church. **Try bringing in a speaker** who is familiar with the issues of making a church accessible. This speaker can help your church to identify issues in your church and learn how to be sensitive. You could also have a **Disability Awareness Sunday** to help raise awareness of the need and necessity of being fully inclusive. Help people to deal with their fears about disabilities and become aware of attitudes and prejudices they may have.

Get to know organizations in the area that work with people with disabilities. Maybe people from your church can go there and volunteer. You could even invite some of the people you meet to your church. Make sure that they have a way of getting to your church and people ready to meet and **welcome them into the community**.



Ushers and Greeters

It is essential that the ushers and greeters in your church have some **basic training** to relate to people with disabilities. They should know basic wheelchair etiquette, where to find special needs amenities (i.e. large print items, Braille books if they are available, assistive listening devices, fragrance free section), and how to use appropriate language when referring to a person with disabilities. Look in the disability resource section for other tips on relating to people with disabilities.

2 Corinthians 13:4

For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.



How can the church support families of those with disabilities?

- **Get to know the family**

Get to know everyone in the family and ways that you are able to help them.

Especially get to know the person with the disability. The more you can see the person the less the disability will cause you to be uncomfortable or unsure of what to say.

- **Help during the church services**

People with more severe disabilities sometimes require a lot of attention and energy. The family may not be able to get anything out of the church services because they are so concerned about their family member.

A church can have helpers to sit with the person during the service or during Sunday school. This allows the family to better focus on God.

- **Pray and ask for prayer requests**

- **Be an advocate for the person especially in the job place for adults and extracurricular activities.**

- **Provide respite care**

More about respite care on the next page.



In order to have a healthy relationship with anyone, it is important to have some time apart. A person with severe disabilities does not always get that time away from those they love because their needs are so great. Like two people trapped in a small room, resentment, anger, and frustration can overwhelm the relationship. To prevent this from happening, the church can provide a few hours, a day, or a weekend of respite care.

To begin a respite care program, have a few volunteers who are willing to be with the person and learn how to handle all their needs. This person would typically need to spend some time with the family to learn how to care for the person with disabilities. Start with providing care right in the home. Spend an hour or two with the person while the rest of the family can relax, take a nap, do laundry, or something else.



Then you can progress to having the family members go out for a few hours while a volunteer stays behind to provide for the needs of that person. When everyone is comfortable with this, the family could go on a weekend retreat allowing everyone to have some well deserved alone time and relaxation.



Should we have separate services or Sunday School for people with disabilities?

This can be a difficult issue. “Wherever there is a ‘special’ ministry, it is ministry ‘to’ or ‘for’, but not ‘with’ (Lane, 101). We are missing out on a part of God when we put ‘different’ people in their own little room. Too many times, people unintentionally equate those with disabilities with children and send them out of the service all together to their own service because they believe the person cannot understand what the ‘grown-ups’ will be talking about.

There are times when it is appropriate to have a Sunday school class or Bible Study group for people who have similar disabilities. Talk



to these people in your church and discover what they want. Ask those who can to help lead these groups. This would be a great opportunity for a person with a disability to take a leadership role within the church. This type of group would be just like other Bible Study and Sunday school groups found in many churches. Some examples are the singles group, couples group, and 20-somethings group. These groups are made up of people who share similar life experiences and struggles and can be a source of encouragement and comfort. They can focus on the parts on the Bible that are most relevant and challenging to their lives.



Disability Simulation Exercises

Disability simulation exercises should always be done carefully and with respect. If they are done wrong, it can leave the participants with a feeling of pity for those who they are trying to understand. It can also be very easy for your participants to leave with the “Rescuer Mentality.” This is the feeling that they need to come and ‘rescue’ those who are living with blindness, hard of hearing, etc. According to Kathie Snow who published “Disability is Natural” these experiences can be demeaning: “I’m glad I don’t live like that.” However, there are ways to allow members of your congregation to try and experience what life would be like with a disability without degrading the worth of someone who has a disability. These suggestions come from Art Blaser at Chapman University.

- Talk to someone who has disabilities, whether from your neighborhood, school or work. Ask them about their whole life, not just their medical condition. Try going to <http://www.census.gov> to see the statistics and surveys done on disabilities in your area.
- Try watching a movie or reading a book. John Hockenberry’s Moving Violations is a good book showing the day to day joys, struggles, frustrations, dreams, and more of one man who uses a wheelchair. The Elizabeth Bogg Center recommends these videos to display: When Billy Broke His Head, I am Sam, My Left Foot, My Other Sister, What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?, Children of a Lesser God, and Mr. Holland’s Opus. Discuss if these stories are typical experiences or not.



- Plan an outing where you only go to places that are accessible. This can build awareness of how inaccessible our society can be. For example, maybe you will have to take a taxi instead of the buses or trains, or maybe you will have to use different stores to do your errands.

- Some people with disabilities say there are positive aspects of being disabled, discuss why this is so.

2 Corinthians 12:10

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.



Planning Social Outings

If your church is planning an outing with an individual who has a disability it is a good idea to call the location ahead of time. This ensures that the needs of this individual or individuals will be met. Let the person know before hand that you are calling and see if they have any certain questions they would like to have asked.

Here is a list of questions to start with:

Are the buildings wheelchair accessible?

Are the paths and parking lots paved?

Are exits clearly marked?

Will large print of materials be available?

Where is the nearest hospital?

Will there be an ASL interpreter?

**If movie clips will be shown,
will it have captioning?**



Pastoral Care

Caring for families and individuals whose lives are affected by disabilities requires that you **examine your own theology** of how disabilities come about. Many parents upon their child's diagnosis feel as though it is their fault. A common response by mothers is that they must have done something wrong during pregnancy. Not only do they have feelings leaning towards this, but they often have their own families or friends telling them the same thing.

Perhaps an adult in your congregation has suffered from an accident that has left him or her disabled, or has been recently diagnosed with degenerative disease such as muscular dystrophy. **They may feel that God is somehow punishing them** for something that they have done wrong. Another reaction is that **God simply does not care**, or else He would not have let this happen. Dealing with these emotions can take a lifetime.

Our jobs as ministers of the Gospel are to let God's love be known. In Romans 8:37-39 the apostle Paul tells the Romans that nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God. As a leader in your church, you must physically act this out. Make sure that these families feel welcomed, that their children's needs are met especially during Sunday School, that they are able to wheel their chair up the church aisle to take communion. These may seem like little things, but they mean a great deal. **Sadly, churches have politely asked families and individuals to leave the church, because their presence made others uncomfortable.** Do not let your church become one of these.



In John 9, God tells his disciples that neither the man born blind nor his parents have sinned, but he was born blind so that God's glory would be revealed. This story can be important to parents who are wrestling with feelings of guilt. We may never understand why God allows certain things to happen; however, it is important to help the person understand that God is not punishing the person or the family. God's love is unconditional.

Often, the most important thing that you can do is to sit and listen. While this might not seem like a lot, it is very important. Knowing that there is someone out there who truly cares, who will take the time to listen to their concerns, and pray for them is a wonderful gift.

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.



The Grief Cycle

There are stages of grief that one goes through when they find out they or a loved one has a disability. It is common and natural to go through this process. As a pastor leading someone through this, allow them to vent their feelings. Remember to pray for those to whom you are providing guidance.

Phase One: Shock, Despair, or Denial

Disability often causes a person to reevaluate their dreams and expectations for life. This can throw the person into a period of shock and denial.

Phase Two: Anger

Anger is normal and should be expressed in healthy ways to help a person move toward full healing. However, this stage of anger should not be compared to the anger from discrimination, inequality, and issues of justice.

Phase Three: Bargaining

This is another form of denial. "I can do more good for the church if you let me have the use of my legs again."



Phase Four: Depression

It is helpful to turn to God during this time and see what He is trying to teach us. A good book for this would be “A Dark Night of the Soul” by St. John of the Cross. The church family is especially important during this time if even to encourage the person to just get through the day. A person who is depressed may feel helpless and fearful. Medical intervention may be needed for severe depression.

Phase Five: Acceptance

- * Acceptance does not mean one has to “like” the disability but rather “learning to live with it rather than suffering from it” (Lane, A Healing Ministry, The Grief Cycle, page 3)
- * Being able to be angry in healthy and safe ways and using it to work for change.
- * Forgiveness of themselves, God, and others
- * Being realistic but seeking modifications and problem solving to change the things that can be changed

This grief cycle is natural and healing when the person progresses through all the steps. This process is one that a person can walk through with God at their side.



Multi-Sensory Worship

Many churches are great about having multi-sensory worship.

This is wonderful especially for those who have cognitive disabilities. Music, candles, bread, wine, flowers, community, small groups,



lighting, pictures, water, light, oil, art, skits, dance, silence, touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight, and many more things that are commonly in worship (not all, but usually more than one) allow those who cannot quite understand what is going on in one part to understand in another part. Burt's muscle spasms, which are caused by Tourette Syndrome, are controlled in the song and ritual of the service (Webb, 36-37). Rachel, who has mental retardation and cerebral palsy, sings



whenever music is played in church. Churches can be great places for the integration of all people.



Romans 12:1-8

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.



Hear O Israel

Redefining what it means to See and Hear:

When one thinks of the words 'hearing' and 'seeing,' very tangible ideas come to mind.

You can see an object in front of you, or hear a conversation.

When the Bible mentions the word 'hear,' or 'see' however, it



goes much deeper than our five physical senses.

In Deuteronomy 6:4 God is giving the people a list of commandments.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." It is not about physically hearing, but about a call to action.

In Isaiah 59:1, the hearing of the Lord is mentioned. "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear." The author is writing about the Lord's abilities to hear the prayers of the Israelites. In this case, the word hear, is about God's knowledge of the prayers of the people.

John 9, the story of Jesus and the man born blind, is perhaps the clearest example that sight goes beyond our visual sensations. The next time you run into these passages from the Bible where you are commanded to see or hear, think about what God is truly calling you to do.



Excerpts from John 9

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing...

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided. Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." ...

Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."



The Disabled God

What? How can God be disabled? “God has chosen to be to an extent dependent on us, dependent on human response to the prompting of our consciousness. In this dependence on us, God experiences both impairment and disability” (Eiesland, 98). Even when God is ‘disabled’ by us, however, his disability is still much greater than our best ability. God can work in multiple and mysterious ways.

Christ can often be viewed as the disabled God. **God limited Himself and took on a human form.** When He was human, *He was human*. He felt joy, sorrow, and suffering. He refused to use his abilities for the wrong purposes (Matthew 4:1-11). He allowed Himself to be hung on a cross. However, it is important not to focus on the crucifixion, but Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus enabled God to be truly Emanuel, God with us. **“For our God is not a distant God of power who ignores the cries of the oppressed, but a disabled god, a wounded God, whose wounds will never disappear throughout eternity”** (McCloughry, 69). It is interesting to note that after Jesus’ resurrection, His hands still bore the scars from the crucifixion (John 20:27). God suffers and weeps with us. He understands and is present. “Thus God is able to be disabled and to suffer” (Lane, 30). For more information on this topic see Nancy Eiesland’s book “A Disabled God.”

Romans 3:23 (New International Version)
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God



The Difference Between Being Healed and Being Cured

“He [Jesus] treated each person as an individual, paying attention to their unique situation by using a variety of methods to remove their disabilities” (Block, 105). Jesus used the methods of spit, command, wash, and mud to cure a disability. **The focus, however, was not about the removal of the disability.** It was about the forgiveness of sins. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’...’But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...’ He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’ He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying ‘We have never seen anything like this!’” (Mark 2:5, 10-12).

There is a **difference between healing and curing.** Jesus healed many more people than he cured. Jesus worked toward **healing the whole person** including the body, mind, and spirit. “Healing represents a condition of one’s life; curing relates strictly to one’s physical condition” (Lane, 25). Jesus sought to heal others, not necessarily cure them. **Healing allows one to live with their disabilities, or other issues, instead of suffering from them.** When Jesus healed it resulted in people coming closer to God by following Christ. “And Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him on the road” (Mark 10:52).



“I have lived with cerebral palsy since birth and have experience first hand the side-effects of Christians who wanted to heal me of CP. It took many, many years to heal from the damage of those experiences. I have never felt a need to be physically healed. Rather, I have needed healing from the rejection, abuse and frustration which came from the negative expectations and attitudes of those who tried to prevent me from being all I can be” (Lane, 144).

You may ask why these people in the Bible were cured and healed. Why were they not just healed? Why did Jesus not leave an example of somebody living fully with their disability? **In the Biblical society, a person with a disability was often rejected from the religious community.** In order to bring



Pool of Bethesda, Jerusalem mentioned in John 5 where a man was healed and cured

full healing to the people in these passages, they had to have a way to join the community and have a way to God. Jesus cured and healed in order that they could be restored to a proper relationship with the community and with God.

For a great book on reinterpreting these healing passages in the Bible, see “*A Healing Homiletic*” by Kathy Black.



Who We Are vs. What We Can Do

Western culture strongly stresses what a person is able to do. People are respected based on what they accomplish. The society gives rewards for those with the best grades, or the best piece of art. The church also falls into this mentality, giving awards for the most community service, or for doing great things in the church. Other cultures are more focused on being. It is more important, in these cultures to be the best person you can be. Our churches need to take more of this attitude. **Our salvation is not based upon what we have done, but what God has done.** All we have to do is accept. “When our value in the church is reduced, simplified, and categorized by what we can *do* in the church, the church is in danger” (Webb, 33).

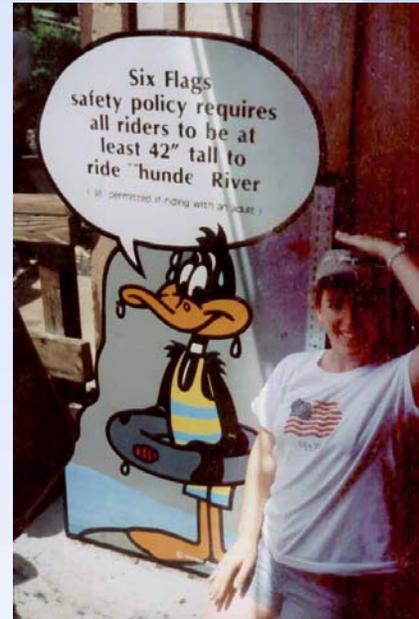
This mentality especially applies to those with mental disabilities. Commonly the church asks “What can they *do* in the church” or “What will they *get* out of it?” (Webb, 33). These statements, which place the emphasis on us, are part of our ‘do’ mentality. Even if we can see no improvement or use, it is still good and necessary to include everybody into the Christian community. “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me [God/Jesus]” (Matthew 25:40). Some churches may believe that it wastes time being with those who might not understand or that it is too expensive. **“On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor”** (1 Corinthians 12:22-23). We are all God’s children.



That's not a disability!

How Culture Defines Disability

The culture in which one lives determines what is considered a disability. For example, a society which is designed for only tall people might consider anyone less than 5'5" disabled. **The person is handicapped by the society around them.** Would being deaf be considered a disability if everyone knew sign language and was fully accommodating to both hearers and non-hearers alike? No! In fact, in many places this has already happened. Deafness has ceased to be known as a disability. Instead it is just another subculture in our society.



When a person receives a society given label, it is hard for anyone to see that persons gifts, or even for that person to see their own gifts. We only focus on what the person cannot do. We are all a part of God's body and all have weaknesses and dependencies. "So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" (Romans 12:5-6).



Sexuality

In the past, people with disabilities were forcibly sterilized so they would not reproduce and pass on the disability to the next generation. Eugenic philosophies were widespread throughout many countries. American institutions for people with disabilities during the early to mid 1900s are just one example of this. In New York in 1915, people were hired to hold signs saying things like “I cannot read this sign, by what right have I children?” Unfortunately, unconsciously it still affects our society. Many times people who have disabilities are discouraged from marrying and/or having children.

If you are a pastor, you may be called upon to counsel a person on whether or not to marry and/or have children. Each situation is very different but I encourage you to look past any prejudices you might have and truly listen to the people in the situation.

Most people who have paraplegia or quadriplegia have perfectly normal intelligence and are completely capable of raising a family. This person is able to have sex and it is possible for many to become pregnant or father a child. A pregnant woman who uses a wheelchair will need special medical care throughout the pregnancy and the delivery process.



Disability Civil Rights Movement

It is important for a church who wants to be more inclusive of people with disabilities to be aware of the Disability Civil Rights Movement. Without having some knowledge of the past we are likely to hold unknown prejudices or repeat the mistakes of the past. Although I cannot give this topic justice here, I will provide a brief summary of the movement.

Throughout history having a disability was usually considered tragic. In many societies it meant that a person could not support themselves or their family, or that they were a burden to the society. They were viewed as an object of pity without any ability to make their own decisions. Commonly, they were sent away or excluded from society. In America's history, people with disabilities were commonly sent to institutions and hidden from the world.

With inadequate staff and facilities people were found living on the floor, chained them to their beds, and laying in their own filth. Some people in these institutions were also force fed, forcibly sterilized, abused, and had medical experiments done upon them without their consent.



People with disabilities were hidden from the world.

The World Wars began to change all that. Many people came back from the wars with a disability. Before the war, people with disabilities were forgotten about and excluded from society. Now that people others knew and loved were coming back with various disabilities something had to change. President John



F. Kennedy also raised awareness for people with disabilities due to his sister Rosemary Kennedy having a disability.

In the 1960's and 70's, individuals with disabilities gained more rights just like other minority groups at the time. People with disabilities began to get together and demand independent living as well as the same services as everyone else. In 1973, a revision was made to the rehabilitation act to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed ensuring equal access to education for all students, and was followed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 which required the student to be placed in a least restrictive environment (usually a mainstreamed classroom unless the individual required more help).

It was not until 1990 with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Acts (ADA) that people with disabilities were given the same rights as others by law with equal access to employment and public accommodations. However, discrimination still exists today whether it is by people's attitudes or by physical barriers.

The disability culture today is working towards creating pride in a person's disability and creating positive self images. Instead of just acceptance into the wider community, the aim is to become a part of the wider community offering their own diverse backgrounds and legacies.



*This sign is slightly outdated.
It should read
"Accessible Parking"*

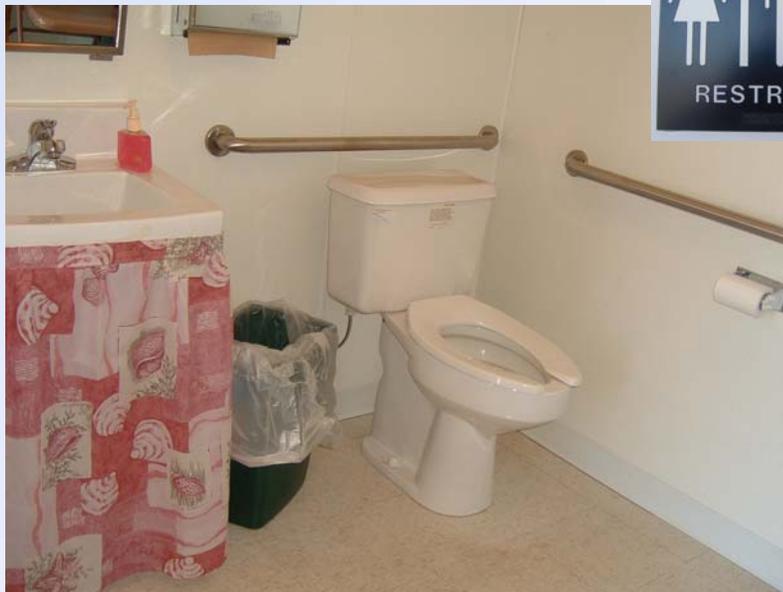


Grants

There are many grants available to help non profit organizations and even faith assemblies to become more accessible. Many times this depends on the congregation and the state in which you are located. Try looking at the internet to find these resources or at your local library or city government building.

Here is one place to start:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/grant-opportunities.html>



A donation helped Faith Covenant, a small church in Omaha, build this accessible restroom



Annotated Resource List

Accessibility

Dancing with Disabilities by Brett Webb-Mitchell (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1996)

This book is a must read for everyone! It raises the joys, the hardships, frustrations, triumphs of people with disabilities in the church. Some sections of this book may the reader what to shout with frustration and anger at some of the ways churches can treat people with disabilities. Other sections show how great the church can be at accommodating everyone.

This is a great book for a church wanting to start being fully inclusive of people with disabilities. If your church has a core group of people desiring to lead the church in being more inclusive, this would be a good book to start seeing the issues and struggles of the church in regards to disability.

This book may be ordered through <http://www.christianbook.com> or by calling 1-800-CHRISTIAN (1-800-247-4784) Stock Number WW9811524

Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities Into the Church by Brett Webb-Mitchell (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1994)

This practical book challenges congregations to be more inclusive. It explains why this should be done along with how, where, and in what ways.

Different Members, One Body: Welcoming the Diversity of Abilities in God's Family edited by Sharon Kutz-Mellem (Louisville, KY: Witherspoon Press, 1998)

This is a practical handbook for churches that gives a lot of information to change the barriers that keep people with disabilities from being fully included in the church. It is available through the Presbyterian Distribution Service at (toll free) 1-800-524-2612. It can also be ordered online at www.pcusa.org/marketplace/index.jsp

Item #097300,

Item #097301 Audiotape edition

Item #097302 Braille edition



Human Disability and the Service of God edited by Nancy Eiesland and Don Saliers (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998)

This book has various contributors who discuss raise the textual, theological, practical, and cultural issues when the church is fully accommodating of all people with disabilities. The fourteen contributors to this book offer a view of what it truly means to serve God.

That All May Worship by the National Organization of Disabilities.

This book is a very helpful resource for churches just starting to learn about accommodating all people in the church. It is for all faiths and addresses language, leadership, and litany. Suggestions are provided for adapting the service for different disabilities.

This also includes *An Audit of Barriers* which is a check list that allows the church to access how accessible they are. It includes attitude barriers, physical barriers, and more.

These may be ordered online at
http://www.nod.org/resources/PDFs/rel_ordrfm.pdf

Creating an Inclusive Worship Community: Accommodating All People at God's Table by Elizabeth Browne (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2004)

Creating an inclusive worship community starts with awareness. Elizabeth Browne shares a panel discussion held within a church led by people with disabilities. Interlaced with stories of these lives there are also suggestions for accommodations for different disabilities.

Personal Stories

In the Name of Jesus by Henri Nouwen (New York, NY: Crossroad/Faith & Formation, 1993)

In 1983 Father Henri Nouwen moved into the L'Arche community in Toronto. This was a place where individuals with and without disabilities live alongside one another. In this book (one of the forty he wrote in his life time), Nouwen is invited to speak in Washington DC regarding the community he lives in. He brings along a resident of the community, Bill, who asks to address the crowd. The book gives incredible lessons on Christian leadership.



The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey by Henri Nouwen (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988).

This is another book by Nouwen who spent part of his life living with people with disabilities in L'Arche and Daybreak communities. This book is about his struggles during this time and also the great truths he learned.

Joni by Joni Eareckson Tada (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

Joni was a young woman of seventeen when a diving accident left her paralyzed from the neck down. This is her story of her accident, and first few years as a quadriplegic. In the book, the reader walks along with Joni as she begins to truly examine her faith and see that God is still working her life.

Nobody Nowhere by Donna Williams (New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks, 1994)

Donna Williams grew up in rural Australia in the 1960's, where the word autism was not even heard of. In this book, Donna struggles with a family not understanding her differences, and trying to find out how she will fit in with society.

Moving Violations: War Zones, Wheelchairs, and Declarations of Independence by John Hockenberry (New York, NY: Hyperion, 1996)

This autobiography of John Hockenberry is a very real look at the life of a person who is in a wheelchair. Becoming paralyzed in college he recounts his joys, struggles, pains, and humor throughout his life. This book provides a very real look at just how human everyone is and how our society sometimes tries to take away that humanity.

Theology

Healing Homiletic by Kathy Black (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996)

This book is a must read for pastors and others interested how to interpret Bible passages about disability. Throughout the book, one gains a perspective on how people with disabilities may view these passages. Specific passages are examined throughout the book understanding them both in the context in which they were written and for us today. The distinction between being healed and being cured is made in this book.



The Disabled Disciple: Ministering in a Church without Barriers by Elizabeth Browne (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1997)

This book gives suggestions for how to effectively minister to people with disabilities as well as how integral people with disabilities are to the church in general. She also relates some of her own struggles with the Bible passages about disability.

The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability by Nancy Eiesland (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994)

This book examines the “hidden history” of individuals with disability in the church. It suggests a new way of looking at God as disabled. This view of God is to be used in addition to the other ways a person views God. This book helps a person to widen their view of God and not keep Him in a box.

Copious Hosting: A Theology of Access for People with Disabilities by Jennie Weiss Block (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002)

This book suggests a “theology of liberation” for people with disabled. She attempts to make churches leaders aware how hurtful their non-inclusive language and liturgies can be. Block gives an introduction of the disability movement, a critical look at the modern church, and suggests for making everyone feel welcome within the church.

Other

God Plays Piano, Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children by Brett Webb-Mitchell (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993)

This book allows children with various disabilities to share their life stories and spiritual perspectives. This book is one of a kind addressing the spiritual needs of children with disabilities.

Disability is Natural by Kathie Snow (Woodland Park, CO: BraveHeart Press, 2005)

This book is great for parents of those with disabilities offering common sense ideas and techniques on raising children with disabilities. It recognizes disability being a natural part of what it means to be home. It helps the family see that everyone can achieve their dreams. Written by a mother of a child with a disability, this author knows what she is talking about.



No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement by Joseph Shapiro (New York, NY: Random House, 1994)

This book is a good introduction to the history of the disability civil rights movement.

Forgotten Crimes: The Holocaust and People with Disabilities by Suzanne E. Evans (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2004)

For anyone interested in learning more about the history of people with disabilities this book is essential. It discusses the often forgotten holocaust of people with disabilities during World War II including euthanasia, death camps, hunger houses, and forced sterilization.

Feed All My Sheep by Doric C. Clark and Kinley Lange (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000)

This is a good resource for a church starting a Sunday school for adults with developmental disabilities. It gives over 30 lessons that a person could use to teach this class. It also provides songs that could be used in this setting.

Not All Violins: Spiritual Resources by Women with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses by The Barb Wire Collective (Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1997).

In this book nine women who have chronic illness or disability share stories of their faith. "They offer models of truth-telling, anger, passion, creativity, and humor that come with living on the edge" (from the back cover).

To order this book call toll-free at 1-800-288-7365 or go to <http://www.united-church.ca/ucrd/pdf/orderform.pdf>

Books for Children and Adults

You are Special by Max Lucado (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997)

While this book is meant for children, it should be read by all. In this book, a young man learns that he is special because he has been made his creator and that he should not be worried about what others think of him.



Looking After Louis by Lesley Ely and Polly Dunbar (Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Company, 2004)

For 1st through 4th grades this book is about a little girl who sits next to a boy, Louis, who has autism in her class. Throughout the book the girl begins to understand why Louis sometimes follows different rules, but is still the same as any of the other kids in the classroom. This is a good book to help children accept other children who may act a little differently from them.

Rolling Along: The Story of Taylor and His Wheelchair by Jamee Riggio Heelan (Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers, 2000)

This book is for children ages 4-8. It is a true story about Taylor who has cerebral palsy. In the book we see some of the activities that Taylor does. We learn that Taylor enjoys the same things as other children. This book is another good one to help children to see the similarities instead of differences between themselves and others. It also shows a little bit of the frustration that is felt by some people with disabilities helping the children increase understanding.

Web Resources

Resource Packet on Disability, Spirituality, and Healing by Rev. Nancy Lane, Ph.D. (New York, NY: The Center on Human Policy at Syracuse University, 1999)

This online resource is a must see for any church leaders. Rev. Lane has many resources available that come from her own experience with disability and her many years of educating others. In the Handout section you can find articles on the aesthetics of accessibility, counseling people with disabilities and their families, the fears that people with disabilities may have towards those without disabilities, accepting disability, the ways the church can help, the grief cycle, forgiving God, spiritual abuse, healing, and theological questions.

One can also find on this website a wonderful annotated bibliography which includes books which address abuse and disability, addiction, biblical studies, depression and spirituality, feminism and disability, general disability studies, grief, healing, ministry, spirituality and disability, studies in theodicy, the problem of suffering, and theology.

This can be found at: <http://thechp.syr.edu/spirituality.html>
or by contacting: The Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University
805 South Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13244-2280



Disability Etiquette – Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities by
Judy Cohen

This is another online resource that gives very helpful tips for interacting with people with disabilities. Each section includes great cartoon illustrations that show both an improper way to act and a proper way to act.

<http://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf>

Or to obtain a copy of this call the United Spinal Association's Publications toll-free at 1-800-444-0120

National Organization for Disability

<http://www.nod.org>

This website addresses housing, jobs, transportation, healthcare, education, politics, and more. It also devotes a section for religious participation. You can find here an online *An Audit of Barriers*, a list of spiritual leaders with disabilities willing to answer questions, resources, articles, conferences, and more.

Roofbreaker Guides: Simple and practical advice on how to make your church welcoming to disabled people (at little or no cost!)

<http://www.throughtheroof.org/downloads/downloads.html#rbg>

then click on Roofbreaker Guides

This is a wonderful website offering practical advice on how to make people with disabilities feel welcome. There is a section for each major type of disability and also guidelines for church stewards.

Access Sunday Worship Celebration Packets by Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA)

<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/resources/resources-pdc.htm>

This website provides great resources for a church wishing to have a Disability Awareness Sunday. It provides 3 years of resources including suggested hymns, sermon ideas, prayers, call to worship, children's moment, Sunday School for children and adults, resources, and much more.



Church Educational System: Disability Guide

https://www.ldscs.org/inst_manuals/disab/manualindex.asp

This website put on by the Church of Latter Day Saints has a section on many different disabilities including behavioral problems. These sections include ways to help, teaching tips, and resources for that specific disability.

Accessible Faith: A Technical Guide for Accessibility in Houses of Worship by Elizabeth Patterson and Neal Vogel (The Retirement Research Foundation)

This resource can be found online. It provides the technical specifications for making a church accessible. It includes the width of the sidewalks, the height of hand rails, the amount of accessible parking spaces, and much, much more. It also includes suggestions for how to start making a church physically, auditory, and visually accessible. It gives suggestions on how to set priorities, draw up plans, hiring and architect, and how to fund this project.

<http://www.rrf.org/noteworthy/AccessibleFaith-final.pdf> (try this website first)
http://www.rrf.org/noteworthy/afg_tech.html

You can also order it from the Retirement Research Foundation for a small fee.

Partners for Sacred Places
1700 Sansom Street, Tenth Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-567-3234



Appendix A:

How to Teach in Different Ways

Different people learn in different ways. Some people learn best when there is one person doing the teaching. Other people learn best when they are able to be in groups. Howard Gardner a psychologist suggested that people have different intelligences. Below is his list with a few suggestions from me as to what a Sunday School teacher can do to cater to these types of learners. Some of these suggestions work better for younger classes, others work better for adults.

Kinesthetic

- Play games in the lesson
- Use hand gestures to go along with the Bible story
- Act out the Bible story
- Do a craft with the lesson
- Give the person clay during the lesson to use in any way they like

Visual-Spatial

- Use pictures to illustrate the lesson
- Allow the person to draw pictures during the lesson
- Act out the story and put this person in charge of finding props or deciding where to act it out
- Use a maze that supports the lesson
- Use biblical maps and charts

Musical

- Use songs or hymns
- Use rhythms and patterns to memorize different things
- Use or write poems
- Introduce the types of music and instruments used in the Biblical period

Linguistic

- Read the Bible and other biblical literature in the lesson
- Have the person write reflections about the lesson
- Provide paper for note-taking
- Bring in devotionals and reflections
- Read or write poems about the lesson

Interpersonal

- Have small and large group discussions
- Allow people to work in partners or small groups
- Encourage them to discuss issues with other people in the group

Intrapersonal

- Allow time to journal
- Provide time for personal reflection or individual time

More on the Next Page!



Mathematical-Logical

- Allow the person a chance to organize things into charts
- Use charts
- Use numbers in the lessons
 - i.e. How many years did it take Noah to build the ark?
 - How long and wide is the ark?
 - You could even convert the biblical units into modern units.
- Raise difficult questions about how and why things happen in the Bible. Give opportunities for people to discover more and try to find an answer for these questions.

Naturalistic

- Go outside
- Try to see God in all forms of creation
- See the plants and animals that are in the Bible
- Find recipes that may have been used in the biblical time or that go along well with the lesson and cook them in class



The Sea of Galilee from Mount Arbel, Israel

How can you try to incorporate all of these different things? It would be hard to try and do something to appeal to all these learners in one lesson. Start by choosing activities from at least two different categories. Over the course of the next few weeks, try to ensure that at least one lesson caters to each person's strongest learning style.

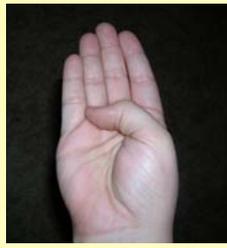


Appendix B:

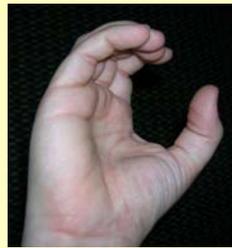
Sign Language Letters Used in the United States



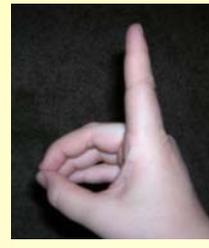
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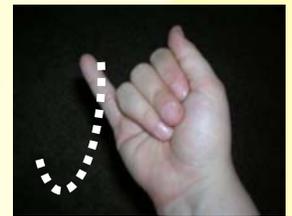
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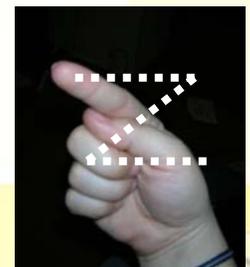
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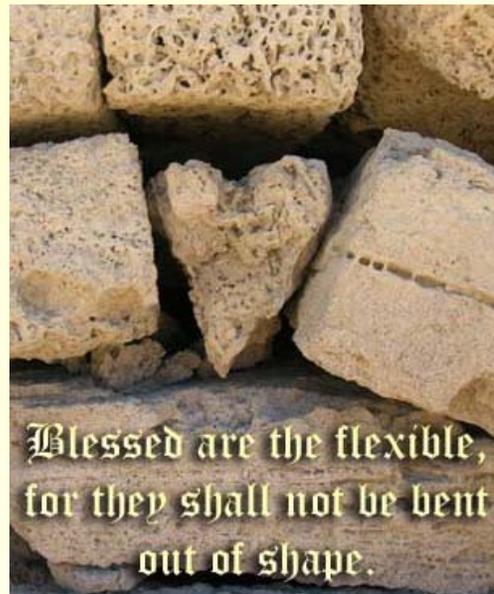
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Appendix C:

Tips for Preventing Negative Behaviors

- Listen!
- Give 5 minute warnings when switching between activities
- Limit visual and auditory distractions. Head phones can work great!
- Have a safe, structured, predictable environment
- Allow the person 5 seconds to respond after giving a direction
- Use a lot of positive encouragement
- Have a space that the person can go to when they begin to lose control
- Expect the person to be respectful
- Be flexible!
- Avoid power struggles
- Give the person some choices
- Talk with the person or their family for suggestions on how to deal with the behaviors. Develop a plan on how to deal with the behavior when it happens.
- What is happening when the behavior occurs? What can be done to avoid that situation in the future?
- Explain to the person why the behavior is unacceptable when everyone is calm and ready to listen. Work with the person for finding acceptable consequences.
- Try ignoring negative behavior when it occurs if it is not dangerous. Sometimes it is attention seeking
- Look at the environment! Some things that many people never notice can really bother people (especially those with an autism spectrum disorder, or sensory integration dysfunction). For example, the humming of florescent lights, the sent of someone's body wash, the feel of a tag on the inside of their shirt or the breeze on their skin, etc.



Appendix D:

Sucide: What to Look For and What to Do

Signs and Symptoms of suicidal feelings

- Talking about feeling suicidal or wanting to die
- Feeling hopeless, nothing will ever change or get better
- Feeling helpless, that nothing one does ever makes any difference
- Feeling like a burden on family and friends
- Abusing drugs and alcohol
- Putting affairs into order
- Writing a suicide note

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal:

- Call a doctor, emergency room, 911, or an emergency hotline
- Make sure that the suicidal person is not left alone
- Make sure that access is prevented to large amounts of medications, weapons, or other items that can be used for self harm
- Help the person find a counselor or someone who can help
- After the immediate crisis is over, help the person find a counselor



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