

# Hearts in Motion



**A four lesson Bible study  
for Disability Awareness**

*Eyes* that see...

*Hands* that help...

*Hearts* that care!

**Leader's Manual**

The logo for Joni and Friends features the name 'Joni' in a large, stylized, cursive font. A long, thin, curved line extends from the bottom of the 'i' in 'Joni' and sweeps under the word 'and Friends', which is written in a clean, sans-serif font. Below the main logo, the text 'The Disability Outreach of Joni Earekson Tada' is written in a smaller, italicized font.

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# Welcome to Hearts in Motion!



**I t is our hope** that your time in God's word through this study will not only impact the lives of disabled people in your community, but that you will be drawn closer to the Lord Jesus, also.

In order for you to get the most out of this study, the following are recommended:

- ➔ Each participant in the study should complete each lesson on his or her own prior to coming to the group study time. This will move things along.
- ➔ Don't dwell on any one question for too long. Let your leader 'lead' you along in the study.
- ➔ Follow the instructions and try not to skip any questions or exercises.
- ➔ Pray as you open the study and close in prayer.
- ➔ Share your thoughts and feelings honestly.
- ➔ Jot down ideas and thoughts in the margin of the study for future reference and action.
- ➔ Complete the evaluation form at the back of the book and mail to Joni and Friends.
- ➔ Enjoy it!

Thank you for joining people across the country in an exciting adventure through the Bible.

*Joni*  
and Friends

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*“The body of Christ includes those parts that don’t talk, walk, think, feel, see, or hear the way the other parts do.” —1 Corinthians 12:27*

# 1

## Eyes That See



***Leader:** The primary purpose of this introductory story is to get people thinking about the need for awareness, and that Christians and the church can have relaxed, productive, and meaningful relationships with people affected by disability. You need not spend time discussing the story. Participants will have read the story prior to attending the group session.*

**You are visiting with friends at their church** where the pastor has just begun his sermon. The pastor's feeble attempt at humor elicits some polite chuckles from the congregation. As the pastor ties in the joke to the main point of the sermon, there is a loud guffaw—Auuugh! Hah!—from the right side of the sanctuary. You turn to see a young man with cerebral palsy, arms flailing, obviously enjoying the joke. He attempts to stifle his uncontrolled outburst but his weak throat muscles give way to his funny bone.

You immediately feel embarrassed and wonder what will happen next. Your church back home would have been filled with red faces and sideways glances. You can feel the flush coming to your face already. What's going to happen? And how is the pastor going to handle this interruption to what seemed an important point in the sermon?

To your surprise, and relief, the pastor looks over at the young man and says, "Thank you, Frank. It's apparent you have the gift of discernment, unlike the rest of this crowd."

The congregation finally knows a good joke when they hear one and laughs, while Frank, the family, and the pastor exchange warm smiles.

The sermon continues as if nothing happened but you look at Frank and his family several times throughout the rest of the morning. You ask silently, "What kind of church is this? How would my church back home have responded? Has this church done something special for it to be so comfortable with a person with a disability? We don't even have anyone with a disability and Frank isn't the only one here with a disability. Why are they here and how did they get here?"

**Healthy relationship** with persons affected by disabilities in your church and community begin with disability awareness and a willing heart. Lesson One will help you take the first step toward awareness. By the end of this lesson, you will:

***Leader:** Read the following objectives out loud. The lesson highlights these objectives in bold so participants will see the structure of the study as it applies to the objectives.*

- ➔ **Understand your attitudes toward disability and people with disabilities.**
- ➔ **Know how God views people with disabilities.**
- ➔ **Learn some of what it is like to be disabled.**

You will explore a variety of ideas, attitudes and emotions in order to help you learn. If you get an idea for future ministry with a person affected by a disability, jot it down on the side for future reference. For now, focus on becoming more aware without thinking about what you have to do!

## Before You Begin

***Leader:** The following exercise is optional depending on the structure and group dynamics.*

Find three people in the group who would be willing to play the part of a person affected by a disability during the study. One person should have a blindfold on during the lesson. Another should not be allowed to talk, only able to communicate by shaking or nodding his or her head, or by writing. Ask another person to sit in a chair placed just outside the doorway of the room or in the corner of the room, away from others. All of these people should share their observations at the conclusion of the lesson.

***Leader:** You can randomly assign disabilities to people or ask for volunteers. Be sure, if you choose to do this exercise, they don't break out of their role during the study. Stop the discussion if they do and point it out to them. Do not give disabilities to everyone. The experiment needs able-bodied people in order to replicate real life.*

Role-playing provides a glimpse into what it might be like to have a disability, but only as looking through a peephole. When experiencing deafness or a wheelchair for an hour or two, the focus often becomes the imposed limitations. But for those living with disabilities, with the grace of God, inabilities do not have to be in the forefront of daily living. Challenges can present opportunities to be creative within our circumstances, and encourage us to depend on the Lord.

Sure, there are days when pain or frustration may seem larger than life; however, God is not limited by our limitations. The focus of life, and disability ministry is what God can do, not what people cannot do (Matthew 19:26).

## Objective One: Understand Your Attitudes

**Each person responds differently** to the idea of having impairment. How we feel about people with disabilities can vary as well. Our attitudes can be shaped by a number of things. Negative feelings need not be a sign of spiritual immaturity or insensitivity. It may be a genuine lack of understanding or a very real fear based upon some experience in the past. Take the time to work through the next few questions and see if any of your attitudes begin to change.

**Leader:** *The idea behind the following questions is to stimulate everyone's understanding of different attitudes. Some members may have never been confronted with such questions. Encourage them to share honest feelings without the fear of people thinking that they are not sensitive or that they are ignorant.*

1. As you drive around the parking lot of a crowded mall looking for a space to park, what do you think about when you see spaces reserved for disabled people? Are you glad the places are reserved? Or do you feel a little frustrated?
2. Imagine what your life would be like if you became disabled tomorrow. If the disability interfered with your ability to walk, discuss what would happen to:
  - ➔ your relationship with your spouse or friend
  - ➔ your job
  - ➔ your part in the church
  - ➔ your walk with Christ

How would you feel after experiencing such changes?

**Attitudes determine actions.** Many things shape attitudes toward persons affected by disability. Positive ones are often fostered by accurate information, flexibility, and personal experience with disability. Attitudes of hostility or apathy may be influenced by fear, negative experiences, or lack of understanding.

3. Read 2 Timothy 1:7. What encouragement does the apostle Paul share with fellow believers?

**Leader:** *Fear or timidity does not come from God. We have access to the Holy Spirit who gives us power, love, and self-control to face any uncertainty with victory.*

4. The key to developing a godly attitude towards people with disabilities is found in the Word of God. Philippians 2:5 unlocks the mystery. What should our attitude be as we serve others?

**Leader:** *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...*

**Accessible hearts enable our attitudes to reflect Christ's love and compassion.** It is helpful to understand our own thoughts and feelings about disabilities. We can then begin to replace negative attitudes with Christ-like ones. Remember to ask for God's guidance as we continue learning about His perspective on disability.

## Objective Two: Know How God Views Disability

**Leader:** *The theology about disability is extensive. Issues of sin and the sovereignty of God may come up during the discussion. Try to focus the group's attention on God's knowledge and purpose in disability rather than who or what caused the disability.*

**We can discern God's view** of disability by examining scripture. Allowing our ideas, thoughts, and perspectives to be shaped by Scripture is essential to seeing people who are affected by disability the way God sees them. Let's begin to discover how our Heavenly Father views disability.

1. Psalm 139:13-16. In what specific ways do these verses acknowledge God's control over:

➔ Disability from birth?

**Leader:** *God creates us from conception. Our impairments are not a surprise to Him.*

➔ Disability acquired later in life?

**Leader:** *Every moment of our lives is orchestrated and allowed by God. Nothing happens by chance or random chaos.*

➔ What was the psalmist's response to God's creative sovereignty (v. 14)?

**Leader:** *Shared responses. The psalmist praises the Lord for he knows he is fearfully and wonderfully made.*

2. In I Samuel 16:7, what does the Lord say to focus on?

**Leader:** *Many times we may need to change our focus to match God's vision regarding people with disabilities. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.*

3. When faced with disability, the question "why?" often dominates. How do the following verses address the purpose of disability?

- a. Exodus 4:1-17

**Leader:** *God wants to use each person regardless of ability*

- b. John 9:1-3

**Leader:** *The revelation of the glory of God; God displays his power and his character through individuals with disabilities when fully surrendered to Him. Disability need not be considered a punishment for sin.*

c. II Corinthians 12:9,10

**Leader:** *Embracing our own weakness enables us to experience the power of the Lord in our weakness.*

d. James 1:2-4, 4:10

**Leader:** *Disability and trials can help develop perseverance and humility. Hardships can be tools for spiritual growth.*

4. What does the Word of God compare our bodies to in 2 Corinthians 4:7?

**Leader:** *Jars of clay to show that it is God who works in us.*

### Objective Three: Learn What It's Like To Be Disabled

The following portion of the study moves you from your perspective and God's perspective into the shoes or wheelchair of a person with a disability. Experiencing a disability is like experiencing life. It is different for everyone. This section is to help develop a better understanding of some of the challenges that can come from having an impairment. This type of empathy prayerfully will lead us to deeper compassion spurring one toward action, not pity.

1. Why should we help those in need (Galatians 6:2; James 2:16)?

**Leader:** *To obey God's Word*

2. What does Matthew 7:12 say about serving others?

**Leader:** *Serve others in the manner you would like to be served*

The following activity is to help increase our awareness of some common difficulties that people affected by disabilities may face. Share ideas within the group about ways one might assist someone with each specific need and review each scripture verse:

➔ Social isolation/loneliness - *Leviticus 13:45-46*

**Leader:** *Invite an individual to share a meal or attend an event with you, keep in touch by telephone, email, or visiting, introduce them to others who may have similar interests, etc.*

➔ Lack of housing - *Luke 14:21*

**Leader:** *Help obtain community-housing information such as Independent living centers, assist with fix-it jobs, extend hospitality, etc*

➔ Poor self image, *II Samuel 9:6-8*

**Leader:** *Encourage through affirming words, friendly, appropriate touch (handshake, hug, touch on shoulder), listen, and when appropriate, share how God views them, etc.*

➔ Financial needs, *James 2:15 – 16, Acts 3:1-5*

**Leader:** *Obtain community information, perhaps offer help in finding a social service agency that can assist with job placement, ask the church if help could be provided, etc.*

➔ Health and Safety, *Matthew 17:14-16*

**Leader:** *Help getting groceries; offer to take them to doctor's appointments and to pick up prescriptions, etc.*

Asking for assistance can be difficult for anyone. And offering help to someone with a disability is at times daunting. Will they be offended? What if I say or do the wrong thing? It is okay to feel a little nervous when beginning something new or different. Step out beyond the butterflies in the stomach and introduce yourself. The question, "May I help you?" or "Would you like some assistance?" are good steps toward putting a desire to help into action. Responding with kindness and patience after having listened to what the individual has said are great starting points.

## A Look Into The Past

**Leader:** *You may want to have someone read this out loud. While in some ways people with disabilities have made progress in our society, there are many people around the world who still suffer as a result of social isolation, misunderstanding and negative attitudes.*

**Individuals affected by disability** have been the object of a great deal of abuse and misunderstanding throughout the ages. In Greece, the Spartans systematically destroyed their physically imperfect citizens, while the Athenians permitted their disabled to die of neglect. In Rome a father was given the authority to destroy an imperfect child immediately after its birth. In the Orient, physically impaired infants were cast out into the wilderness to die by starvation or exposure. In India, physically defective babies were cast into rivers.

Although some problems have become less severe, people with disabilities still face obstacles in society. For example, the unemployment rate for a person affected by a disability in the U.S. is ~ 63 percent. Four out of every five marriages in which a family member is disabled end in divorce after the disability enters the family. The single highest cause of suicides among teenagers is related to disability. What do you think are the causes of these disturbing statistics?

## Conclusions

Given what you've just learned in this study:

1. How do you respond to the language used to describe someone with a disability in our society?
2. What words accurately describe the experience of disability?
3. What words make you feel at ease?
4. Which ones are disturbing to you?

Talk with members of your group who played the roles of disabled people. Have them share about what it was like to be “disabled.” Note their observations here.

**Leader:** *Encourage each member of the group who has been assigned a disability to share their observations and feelings. Those that were not assigned a disability should also share what they learned or felt.*

**Disabled or Handicapped?** A disability is a physical or mental impairment, which restricts or limits activity. A handicap is any encumbrance, which makes success more difficult to achieve. With your growing understanding of ministry to people with disabilities, see if you can identify which of the following are disabilities and which are handicaps.

Multiple sclerosis - **D**

Broken elevator - **H**

Flat tire on wheelchair - **H**

Lack of a sign language interpreter - **H**

Paralysis - **D**

Narrow doorway - **H**

Steps to church - **H**

Down syndrome - **D**

Curb without a ramp - **H**

Deafness - **D**

Blindness - **D**

Cystic fibrosis - **D**

Misconceptions - **H**

*“I can conclude that I am always disabled, but I am not always handicapped. When I was a whole person and played basketball, being only six feet tall was a handicap, but I was not disabled. Working at my desk in my wheelchair I am not handicapped unless you ask me to reach a book on the third shelf over my desk. Therefore, in my condition, I am only handicapped when I try to accomplish something in which my disability makes success more difficult. Does the term really matter? I am what I am.”*

—Robert Lovering, a man disabled by polio (from *Out of the Ordinary*)

## Prayer

*“Lord, we want our sight” —Matthew 20:33*

- ➔ Pray that your church's eyes might be opened to see the world of disability and the people in need.
- ➔ Pray for each member in the group that any lingering fears regarding disability would be dispelled.

# 2

## Lend A Hand



**Y**ou've been thinking about people affected by a disability and possibly getting involved in disability ministry. You have a general sense of wanting to do something, but there is a minor problem. You don't know where to begin.

Many times we don't know where to begin because we have no experience. This unknown territory can be uncomfortable at first. We have no frame of reference for what is expected of us or what "normal" responses or behavior should look like in this new arena embracing people affected by disability. In this age of "political correctness" we're afraid we might do something wrong or even offend someone.

Fear of the unknown is one of the biggest hurdles to overcome when getting to know someone with a disability. In order to overcome this barrier, Lesson Two focuses on making each of us aware of what the Bible says about these relationships. Becoming involved with disability ministry is about developing caring relationships and sharing God's love through kindness.

**By the end of this lesson you will:**

- ➔ **Understand proper motivation for relationships with people with disabilities.**
- ➔ **Learn the proper attitude in helping.**
- ➔ **Be aware of the opportunity for friendships with people who have a disability.**

### Objective One: Understand The Proper Motivation

**Before any ministry or friendship can be successful,** we must have the proper motivation. 2 Samuel 9 gives insight into the appropriate motivation one needs for disability ministry and relationships with people affected by disability. Read the chapter out loud (even if you're by yourself!)

Examine 2 Samuel 9:1. What was David's stated goal that prompted his relationship with Mephibosheth? (Read 1 Samuel 20:12-17 for background.)

***Leader:** David desired to show kindness to Mephibosheth because of his love for and promise to Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father.*

In verse one, the Hebrew word used to describe kindness is *chesed*. In other passages, *chesed* is translated as loyalty or loyal deeds. With that in mind, discuss the following passages to gain an understanding of how Christ wants us to initiate and continue relationships with people affected by disabilities.

1. In 2 Corinthians 5:12-14, for whom was Paul working?

**Leader:** *Paul served others on behalf of Christ.*

2. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, what verb is used to describe the effect Christ's love had on Paul?

**Leader:** *Compels, meaning driven to serve.*

3. Paul addressed Colossians 3:23-24 to slaves, but what point is he making regarding motivation for any kind of service?

**Leader:** *Do all things as unto the Lord.*

These passages help us understand that the motive for ministry does not reside in our feelings toward people but in our loyalty to Christ. Notice that David did not know Mephibosheth was disabled before making a commitment. David showed kindness to him out of his loyalty to Jonathan.

3. According to I Corinthians 13:1-3, what should be the main motive behind everything we do?

**Leader:** *Love – unselfish esteem towards another; as Christ loves us regardless of return; unconditional.*

**Leader:** *We are doing what He did, following in His footsteps. Also refer to Mark 1:32-34, Matthew 4:23-25, 8:14-17, Luke 6:17-19: Jesus spent time with the sick, the disabled, and the “outcasts” of society.*

4. Romans 12:3-8 talks about attitudes and service within the body of Christ. What are some principles you can glean from this passage in regard to serving people affected by disability?”

**Leader:** *Do not be prideful; acknowledge we all have different gifts; only by grace can we serve one another.*

5. What are some unhealthy reasons to serve in disability ministry?

**Leader:** *Pride, feel good, to get something in return, false guilt, etc.*

## Objective Two: Learn the Proper Attitude

**The needs of people and our feelings toward them** are not enough to sustain strong relationships. That is not to say, however, that needs and feelings are insignificant. Study the following passages to heighten your awareness of the proper helping attitude.

Let's take another look at the story of David and Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9.

1. Verse seven describes how David helped Mephibosheth. What three things did he promise?

**Leader:** *He promised to show kindness, to restore all the land of Mephibosheth's grandfather Saul and to have Mephibosheth eat at the king's table regularly.*

2. What problems did David help Mephibosheth overcome? (Hint: Go back to lesson one and look at the problems encountered by people with disabilities.)

**Leader:** *David helped Mephibosheth overcome the problem of safety by providing protection in the kingdom. David helped Mephibosheth overcome isolation by providing fellowship. David helped Mephibosheth overcome financial insecurity by providing him with an income. David provided better housing for Mephibosheth and his servants.*

3. Use the following verses to paint the picture of a proper ministry attitude. In other words, how would you summarize the response God is looking for from His people?

➔ Isaiah 58:10

**Leader:** *Satisfy desires of afflicted or oppressed*

➔ John 15:13

**Leader:** *Lay down our lives*

➔ Galatians 6:2

**Leader:** *Bear one another's burdens*

➔ Luke 10:30-37

**Leader:** *Compassion*

➔ Romans 15:2

**Leader:** *Please and build up others*

➔ James 1:27

**Leader:** *Pure and faultless and/or look after orphans and widows*

## Objective Three: Be Aware of Right Relations

**Ministering with people affected by disability** is often viewed as a “helping” ministry where the able-bodied exist to serve the disabled. Unfortunately, such an approach misses two important opportunities. First, disability ministry is to be designed around relationships. Second, people with disabilities are to be an integral part of the body of Christ—even in their service to you.

The story of David and Mephibosheth offers us another picture of the potential relationship between people with and without disabilities. Read 2 Samuel 9:7, 10-13.

1. What do these verses say about Mephibosheth’s future relationship with David?

**Leader:** *He would have a lasting relationship with David.*

2. Job had three friends who gave him bad advice, but one thing is noteworthy about them. Read Job 2:11-13.

**Leader:** *His friends were there for Job in the midst of all his pain.*

3. What was their response upon hearing the news about Job?

**Leader:** *They came to him and did not abandon him. They spent time with him.*

4. What does this say about their relationship prior to Job’s ordeal?

**Leader:** *They were probably good friends.*

A good relationship involves love and affection, but it’s not just a one way street. You may be the one receiving ministry as you assist and make friends with a person who has a disability!

5. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. What are some of the reasons these verses give for two (relationship) being better than one (isolation)?

**Leader:** *More can be accomplished, help/support when falling, warmth, defense*

## Take A Journey

**Can you think of some ways** that a healthy, Biblical friendship might be developed with a person with a disability? Consider your motivation, what type of help that individual might need, and in what way the friendship could be a mutual blessing.

**Leader:** *Write down responses on the board or sheet of paper. Let the group brainstorm a variety of options. Limit the discussion to no more than 5 minutes.*

## Conclusion

1. Note some of the ways in which people with disabilities can be ministered to.
2. Think of a person affected by a disability with which you could begin a relationship.

## Ministry

*“Most churches have difficulty in ministering to the handicapped simply because of some basic fears and lack of awareness. As we move past these attitudinal barriers and misunderstandings, we’ll discover the joy of caring for someone simply based on the preciousness of their souls, not on their physical attractiveness and intellectual capabilities or social position.” —Joni Eareckson Tada*

## Prayer

*“Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”  
—2 Samuel 9:1*

- ➔ Pray that you and your church will understand the right motivation for ministry.
- ➔ Pray for opportunities to develop friendships with people who have disabilities.



**D**isability affects the family in many ways. Assisting someone with a disability can also make a great impact on others who love and care for him or her. Consider the following true story used by permission from Daniel J.Vance's Weekly Disabilities Column ...

*[The woman below using "Barbara" as an alias fears group home employees reading this column could retaliate against her adult son "Billy." So her identity and his have been masked.]*

Sixty-year-old Barbara deeply loves her adult son, who has mental retardation. "[Billy] was born with brain damage," said Barbara. "He's agile and can do anything physically, but the reasoning and logic part of his brain was affected, meaning he can't comprehend what needs doing for specific jobs. And when getting upset, he can't reason. He just screams."

ARC of the United States, an organization representing about 7.2 million Americans with mental retardation, says that individuals are considered mentally retarded when their IQ is below 75; they are significantly limited in at least two skill areas, and when the condition began in childhood. After The Johns Hopkins Hospital diagnosed Billy at age 5, recently divorced Barbara knew she wanted only the best for her lone child. So she moved with him to a Maryland county offering excellent special education.

She rented a low-income apartment. "The day we moved [there] Billy went outside to play," said Barbara. "I could see the playground from the apartment window and in a little while I saw this kid standing on the back of Billy's neck. So I never let him out alone again. When Billy sat on our ground-level front steps, often I heard kids making fun of him. They called him 'retard.'"

Barbara remarried and they moved to another state. Following Billy's public education, Barbara enrolled him in an expensive private school offering great care. After ten years though, its cost became prohibitive. Now he lives in a group home. "When he's not treated right, it just breaks his heart," she said. "When he was little, my heart was the one broken; now it's both ours. Looking at him, you can't tell he's disabled. But he does have a hard time talking, and people do stare at him."

She doesn't care for his current group home, but knows that if she removes him from the county system, "you can't get him back in; there is a waiting list," she said. Nearing retirement, she knows that Billy couldn't possibly care for himself alone at home should she die. She said, "The prayer of any parent with a disabled child is that you live one second longer than them."

Having become aware of what a person affected by a disability experiences and having gained a biblical perspective on relationships with disabled people, we now turn our attention to those who experience disability from a different perspective—the family.

**By the end of this lesson you will:**

- ➔ **Understand the impact of disability on a family.**
- ➔ **Understand the range of emotions and attitudes expressed by families.**
- ➔ **Develop ideas for how families might benefit from ministry.**

It's very likely that someone in your group has a relative who is disabled. Draw upon their observations in this lesson.

## **Objective One: Understand the Impact of Disability on a Family**

**In Lesson One, you pictured the impact of disability in your own life.** Now picture your child, or another close family member, becoming disabled. For the sake of discussion, picture them becoming a quadriplegic. The child will need assistance with dressing, bathing, toileting, grooming, eating, transportation, etc.

- ➔ What might be your first reaction upon hearing the news?
- ➔ What might happen to your daily household routine?
- ➔ How would your personal finances be affected?
- ➔ How would your child's education be affected?
- ➔ How would your leisure time be affected?

Think back to a time when there was a crisis of some kind in your family. What was the crisis and how did it affect each member of the family? Perhaps the crisis involved a parent losing a job, a child becoming ill, a divorce, or a child being held back in school. What did your family experience in their emotions, attitudes, and even physical well being? Picture that crisis lasting for 5, 10, or even 50 years.

## **Objective Two: Understand the Emotions and Attitudes**

**The following Bible study** examines various attitudes and emotions faced by families.

**Leader:** *Disability can greatly affect the emotional well being of a family.*

1. What one word would you use to describe the situation faced by the parents described in Mark 7:24-30 and Mark 9:14-24?

**Leader:** Responses could vary. Despair, frustration, feeling at a loss, etc. could be used to describe the situation.

2. Read Psalm 55:6-8. A family did not write these verses with a disabled member, but the feelings are the same. How might some members of a family respond in thought or deed to the disability of another member?

**Leader:** Family members may feel like leaving or actually leave in order to escape the situation.

### **Disability affects relationships within the family as well as relationships with those outside the family.**

1. Read Job 2:8-10. Although we don't consider Job to have been disabled, he and his family suffered. How did Job's wife respond to their situation?

**Leader:** Job's wife responded with disdain, bitterness, and anger towards God and Job.

2. Why do you think she responded that way?

**Leader:** Answers could vary here.

3. Job 19:13-15 describes potential changes in relationships with family and non-family. Summarize Job's experience.

**Leader:** Relatives left him. Acquaintances were estranged. Relatives let him down. Intimate friends had forgotten him. Maids cursed him as a stranger.

### **Disability affects a family's perspective.**

1. Elisha had promised the Shunnamite woman that she would bear a son. His promise came true. Several years later the child died and the woman immediately went to Elisha. Note what she says to him in II Kings 4:27-28. What troubled her most? What insight does her experience offer on a family's perspective regarding a child's disability?

**Leader:** She felt betrayed and disappointed.

2. One's view of the future can be affected when a family member becomes disabled. According to Job 17:11, what is one of the things a family may lose?

**Leader:** Disability can cause a family to lose hope.

3. The daily routine of a family with a disabled member can be a struggle. How did Job view his struggles in Job 7:2,3?

**Leader:** Job saw his struggles as futile and burdensome.

4. Read Job 29:2-6 and describe Job's feelings.

**Leader:** Many times feelings of abandonment by God can overwhelm the family in crisis.

5. Ponder Job 10:14,15 as it relates to an individual's feeling of being punished or a sense of shame because of a disability.

**Leader:** *A person might feel like their disability is a punishment, or they might feel a sense of shame even if they don't feel like their disability is a punishment.*

6. What reassurance is available to someone who has this type of emotions (John 9:1-3; John 3:16; Romans 8:1,2)?

**Leader:** *The Lord does not condemn people for their feelings; God loves them and understands the emotions, and wants to help.*

7. According to James 4:12 and Ephesians 4:2, what should our response be when we encounter people's emotions when dealing with a newly acquired or a prolonged disability?

**Leader:** *Be patient and gentle, non-judgmental.*

### Objective Three: Identify Ways to Minister

**Discuss or role-play the following situations.** How might you respond to the family in question?

1. "My husband and I haven't enjoyed a night out together in years because no one else knows how to take care of our son's needs, even though his routine is quite simple."

**Leader:** *Perhaps offer to learn how to help take care of the child and offer to provide childcare for the parents at regular intervals.*

2. "You say I've got dust and dirt all over my wheelchair? Well, it would be nice to have a shiny set of wheels, but I can't ask my dad to clean it, what with all the other things he has to do."

**Leader:** *Get a team together to clean the individual's wheelchair and take turns perhaps once a month or so.*

3. "We have to pour a new concrete ramp at our front door for Billy's wheelchair, and we just got a few estimates. I can't believe how expensive it will be!"

**Leader:** *Look for funding and/or man-power to assist with the ramp: contact your church and/or other churches to see if they will make a financial contribution and/or have a Sunday School class, community group, etc., that does service projects, go to the library and research foundations to fund these type projects, research civic organizations that assist with community service projects, etc.*

Have you ever provided assistance for a family with a person affected by a disability? What was the experience like?

## Conclusion

1. What are some problems encountered by families?
2. Reflect on problems that are common to all families. How does the introduction of a disability put additional stress on the family?
3. Are you aware of a family with a disabled member? What ideas do you have for helping?

## “Give me a Call If I can Help”

*“Take the initiative. Don’t wait for an invitation; rather, approach the family with an idea of how you’d like to assist. . . . It bears repeating that a suggested plan of action makes it much easier for the family to respond. The blanket statement, “Give me a call if I can help in any way,” even though sincere, leaves the family in a rather awkward position. Does it mean you would rather help from your own house? When are you available? Would you rather cook or baby-sit? Are you willing to help with the cleaning or laundry? You can see why it may be an uncomfortable position for the mother of a handicapped child to approach a friend who has given a general offer of help.”* —Joni Eareckson Tada  
(from Barrier Free Friendship)

## Prayer

*“But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.”* —Psalm 5:11

- ➔ Pray that others in your church will be aware of the needs of families with disabled members.
- ➔ Pray for each other, asking God to alert you to ways in which you can minister to families with disabled member.

# 4

## Spread the Word



**W**hen we find out how rewarding it is to develop relationships with people who are affected by a disability, we will want others to join us, reaping benefits for ourselves and for persons affected by a disability. We'll see the church as the natural place for this ministry to develop.

The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20 includes all of Christ's followers; every nation and every person, regardless of ability or disability.

1. Based on this command, what does it mean for the believer without a disability and the believer with a disability?

***Leader:** A disability does not exempt or leave out anyone from the privilege and responsibility of sharing the gospel of Christ. We are all called to tell others about Salvation through Jesus.*

2. With whom are we called to share Christ?

***Leader:** Everyone*

Unfortunately, your church may not be prepared to undertake such a challenge. Other people may not have the awareness and perspective you have gained from this study.

Lesson Four will give you a broader vision of how the church can minister with those who are disabled. It will also enable you to stimulate others in your church to get involved in the lives of a person affected by disabilities.

**At the conclusion of this lesson, you will:**

- ➔ **Understand the unique role the church can play.**
- ➔ **Identify the key ingredients needed by the church to minister effectively.**
- ➔ **Know the benefits to your church of being involved with disabled people.**

As you study, it will be evident that the principles apply to a variety of ministries and relationships, not just to disabled people.

## Open your eyes first

**Discuss what your church is doing now** in its relationship with disabled people.

**Leader:** *You can cover areas such as building, program, ministries to individuals, transportation, etc.*

If you were to become disabled tomorrow, do you think you would still attend the same church? Would anything in the building, people, or programs keep you from coming back?

**Leader:** *Encourage the group to share about their church.*

## Objective One: Know Your Church's Role

**The church, the body of Christ**, is unlike any organization or institution known to man. Its origin, its growth, its mission, its destiny—all are unique. When it comes to disability, it is important to understand that in this arena, too, the church plays a distinctive role.

**Leader:** *The church's role is redemptive.*

Study each of the following passages to identify who Christ included in His redemptive plan:

➔ Mark 2:17

**Leader:** *Unrighteous or sinners*

➔ Luke 4:18,19

**Leader:** *Poor, captives, blind, downtrodden/oppressed*

➔ Luke 14:15-24

**Leader:** *Poor, crippled, blind, lame*

➔ John 3:16

**Leader:** *The world (Anyone else left?!)*

**Leader:** *The church's role is rehabilitative.*

When a person becomes disabled, he or she will usually go through hours of therapy to learn how to use whatever functions they have – how to move, how to work, how to eat, even how to adjust emotionally to the changes. But the church is the only “rehab center” that can provide social and spiritual rehabilitation that will have lasting consequences. Study the following to learn the nature of this rehabilitation.

1. According to 2 Corinthians 5:16,17 how are we to regard anyone who has become a Christian?

**Leader:** *“Anyone” includes people with disabilities. Therefore, we are to regard a person affected by a disability who has become a Christian as a new creation in Christ.*

- a. What impact would this have on a person affected by a disability to know this fact?

**Leader:** *Various answers.*

- b. What impact would it have on the church to realize this fact?

**Leader:** *Various answers.*

- c. What message of hope – entrusted to the church — would be of special importance in a person affected by a disability’s rehabilitation?  
( 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

**Leader:** *Current affliction is producing eternal benefits.*

**Leader:** *The church’s role is reciprocal.*

The church’s relationship with disabled people is not meant to be a one-way street. Study the following to see ways in which disability ministry is actually a reciprocal relationship.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Considering these verses what message can be communicated to the world when people with disabilities are included in the church?  
(1. Corinthians 1:26-31)

**Leader:** *When people with disabilities participate in the church God’s power and wisdom will be seen.*

## Precious Ministers in the Body of Christ

*Can you see what a unique ministry a person affected by a disability, who has learned at such a deep level to look to the Lord for strength to keep going, can have amongst the rest of us who have not had to go so deep and have not had to learn so much about what the Lord can do in our lives? Don’t suppose you don’t count. In many ways you count for more than any of us. —J.I. Packer*

## Objective Two: Key Ingredients for Your Church

**Having examined the church's role** with regard to disabled people, the study now turns to how that role can be carried out.

The purpose of this portion of the study is to find the key ingredient necessary to carry out effective disability ministry. Luke 5:17-26 provides a picture of disability ministry.

Read Luke 5:17-26, and then answer the following questions.

1. How does this account reveal the four men's willingness to help get their friends to Jesus?

**Leader:** *They were willing to do whatever it took to help the paralyzed man.*

2. What "disability" did Jesus heal immediately?

**Leader:** *The disability of the soul – sin.*

The only permanent "disability" is that of not knowing Jesus as Savior. All other disabilities are temporary compared to an eternity in heaven.

3. How does physical weaknesses compare to a person's spiritual well being in God's eyes? (Psalm 73:26; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

**Leader:** *Physical health and disease will all fade away, they will not last an eternity if one goes to heaven, and the spirit and soul are what matter most.*

4. Luke 14:12-14 shares how small acts of kindness such as an invitation to a luncheon or dinner can lead to blessing. Who does Jesus say to invite?

**Leader:** *He says to invite the poor, the lame, the crippled, and the blind. And people who are in need.*

5. The passage relates that Christ saw "their" faith. Who do you think was included in the word "their"?

**Leader:** *"The men who carried the man on the mat showed faith by doing whatever it took to get their friend to Jesus. The man who was paralyzed had faith that Jesus could work in his life."*

6. How did the men express their faith? In what way was it a creative faith? A committed faith? A compassionate faith?

**Leader:** *Creative: Went beyond the parameters of entering through front door.  
Committed: Didn't give up when ministry became difficult.  
Compassionate: Cared enough to go the extra mile.*

## Objective Three: Know the Benefits of Disability Ministry

**Things happen when a church becomes involved** through faith. Search the following scriptures to see the potential.

1. What would be an outcome of bringing someone to Christ according to Luke 5:17-26?

**Leader:** *Their sins can be forgiven, they can experience healing: spiritual, physical or both. Others may question what is going on.*

2. What was Jesus' response when He saw disability ministry in action according to Luke 5:20?

**Leader:** *He saw their faith and forgave their friend's sins.*

3. What does Christ promise when we reach out to those with disabilities in Luke 14:13,14?

**Leader:** *You will be blessed. You will see the reward at the resurrection.*

4. Taking into consideration the verses listed below, as a church, what potential benefits can be received for being involved with disability ministry?

- a. I Corinthians 12 (especially verse 22), Romans 12

**Leader:** *Greater giftedness and spiritual maturity within the church, inclusion of indispensable members and their gifts, unity.*

- b. II Corinthians 12:9, 10

**Leader:** *The weakness of the disabled and our weakness in serving them provide opportunities for the strength of God's grace and power to be showcased.*

## Getting Started

**You've studied this lesson** to see that the church can and should be involved in the lives of disabled people. Now look at your church to see how it might become more aware.

Walk through your church as a group and evaluate the church's accessibility. Imagine being physically disabled in some way (blind, deaf, or immobile using a wheelchair) or having a child with a disability. How difficult would it be to:

- ➔ Enter the church?
- ➔ Drop off a child at the nursery?
- ➔ Go to a Sunday school class?

- ➔ Use a washroom?
- ➔ Find a seat in the sanctuary?

(Note: See the Church Accessibility Checklist in the Resources section.)

Here are six ways that you and your group can increase disability awareness in your church:

1. Form prayer teams or regular prayer times to intercede for those with disabilities.
2. Conduct a disability survey among the families in your church. (See sample Special Church Survey in the Resources section.)
3. Sponsor an annual Disability Awareness Sunday during a Sunday morning service.
4. Become informed by inviting a congregational member who has a disability in the family to share insights with Sunday school classes. Invite a Christian who works with disabled people to do the same, or sponsor an adult Sunday school elective on disability awareness.
5. Form other study groups to complete this study guide.

How do you think each of the above five actions would be received in your church?

## Conclusion

How has your understanding of access changed through the courses of this study? Does access apply to more than a building?

If you are able and willing to further the disability awareness of your church, which of the six actions makes most sense for your church at this time?

How many people in your church have completed this study guide? How many do you think might be open to it? What is the best way to interest them in a Bible study experience like this?

## Prayer

*“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.*

- ➔ Pray that, as part of Christian maturity, your church will become more disability aware.
- ➔ Pray for your church to be ready to respond, to minister sacrificially to a person affected by a disability that has needs.

## Appendix I

# Accessibility Checklist

This checklist will help you evaluate the accessibility of your church of facility.

### Basic Accessibility

Is it possible to get from a parked car to any area in the building without going up or down a step or steps? Yes/No

Is the slope of walks not greater than 5 percent? Yes/No

Are walks of a continuing common surface, not interrupted by steps? Yes/No

Do walks have a level platform, the top of which is 5 feet if the door swings out onto the platform or towards the walk, or 3 by 5 feet if the door doesn't swing onto the platform? Yes/No

Does the platform extend at least 1 foot beyond each side of the doorway? Yes/No

### Ramps

Do ramps have a slope no greater than 1 foot rise in 12 feet and width of no less than 36 inches? Yes/No

Do ramps have handrails on both sides? Yes/No

Are handrails 32 inches above surface of ramp? Yes/No

Are handrail surfaces smooth? Yes/No

Do handrails extend 1 foot beyond the top and bottom of the ramp? Yes/No

### Entrances and Exits

Is at least one primary entrance to each building usable by individuals in wheelchairs? (It is preferable that all or most entrances and exits be accessible to, and usable by, individuals in wheelchairs or persons who are otherwise disabled.) Yes/No

### Doors and Doorways

Do doors have a clear opening of 32 inches or more? Are they operable by a single effort? (Note: double doors are not satisfactory unless they operate by a single effort or unless one of the two doors meets the 32-inch width requirement.) Yes/No

## **Floors**

- Is the floor on the inside and outside of each doorway level for distance of 5 feet from the door in the direction the door swings? Yes/No
- Are sharp inclines and abrupt changes in level avoided at door sills? (1/2 in. for interior doors, ? in. for exterior doors?) Yes/No
- Are floors on each story at common level or connected by a ramp? Yes/No

## **Worship Space**

- Can people participate fully in worship? Yes/No
- Can people hear? Is there adequate amplification of sound; eg., is there an induction loop system or miniature broadcasting system which can be adapted to existing sound systems? Yes/No
- Can people see? Is there adequate lighting to enable participation in worship? (Light sources should be located so there are no shadows on speakers or interpreters.) Yes/No
- Is space provided for wheelchairs? (Minimum of 2 spaces preferred) Yes/No
- Do at least two more spaces have extra legroom for persons with crutches, walkers, braces, or casts? Yes/No
- Can people take communion without climbing steps? Yes/No

## **Rest Rooms**

- Is there at least one accessible toilet room provided on each floor? Yes/No
- Do entrance vestibules, doors, and vision screens allow sufficient clearance for wheelchair passage? Yes/No
- Do toilet rooms have turning space 5 by 5 feet to allow traffic of individuals in wheelchairs? Yes/No
- Is there at least one toilet stall that.....is at least 36 inches wide (42 inches preferred)? Yes/No
- Has a 48 inch clear depth from door to front of commode to allow a wheelchair in the stall? Yes/No
- Has a door that is 36 inches wide and swings out? Yes/No
- Has grab bars on each side, which meet specifications, fastened securely to the wall at the ends and center? Yes/No
- Has a commode with the seat 17 inches to 19 inches from the floor? Yes/No

**Water Fountains**

Is there at least one water fountain on each floor, which is usable and accessible physically by a person affected by a disability? Yes/No

If coolers are wall-mounted, are they hand-operated, with basins 30-36 inches from the floor? Yes/No

**Telephones**

Is there easy access to a telephone? Yes/No

**Elevators**

If your facility is multi-story, does it have an elevator? Yes/No

Is the cab at least 68 inches by 51 inches? Yes/No

Does the door have a clear opening at least 36 inches wide? Yes/No

## Appendix II

# Special Church Survey

Please help us by completing the following questionnaire.

Is a member of your family disabled? Yes/No

Do you have a friend or neighbor who is disabled? Yes/No

What is the disability of your friend/relative? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he/she attend church regularly? Yes/No

If not, would he or she like to? Yes/No

Does your friend or family member have needs such as:  
7Weekly shopping assistance Yes/No

Transportation to medical appointment Yes/No

Respite care Yes/No

Medical equipment Yes/No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If your friend or family member would like to attend this church, what changes (if any) should we make? Circle those applicable:

Parking

Accessibility (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Deaf interpreter

Large-print Bibles

Better sound equipment

Better lighting

Wheelchair cut outs in the pews

Special class for mentally disabled

Special care for child while family is in church. Age of child: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

We would like to help your friend or family member. Please let us have his or her name and address, or ask him or her to contact us.

Friend/relative name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Your name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Please add any additional comments ...