

BASICS

FUNDAMENTALS OF DISABILITY MINISTRY TRAINING

TRAINER'S GUIDE

"Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."

"Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full"

— Luke 14:21a, 23b





BASICS

Rev. James Rene, M. Min.

Joni and Friends
International Disability Center

Agoura Hills, CA, 91376
U.S.A

1-818-707.5664

www.joniandfriends.org

BASICS

FUNDAMENTALS OF DISABILITY MINISTRY TRAINING



Joni and Friends International Disability Center • U.S.A.





Basics: Fundamentals of Disability Ministry Training

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Joni and Friends International Disability Center (U.S.A.)

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INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, a man with a physical disability has been lying in bed in his back bedroom for seven years, living in isolation with no hope as an outcast of his community. In China, a young man is crawling on the ground and begging on the streets so that he may get something to eat, yet many ignore him as if he did not exist. In Romania, a child with a mental disability has been abandoned by her family and lives in an orphanage because they believe she has been cursed.

Are these people valuable to Father God and our Lord Jesus Christ?

Mark 2:3–5

We read: “Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son your sins are forgiven.”

Here we see a wonderful picture of four men of faith (who believed in Jesus) overcome obstacles—the crowd and barriers, the roof—and made a hole through the roof to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Jesus commended the faith of the four men and forgave the paralyzed man. They overcame barriers and obstacles to bring their disabled friend to Jesus so that he would receive forgiveness of sin, just as God desires for all mankind.

Jesus desires to see this story continue all around the world until He comes again— that a people of faith (His Church) will overcome all obstacles and barriers to bring people with disabilities to Jesus so that their sins may be forgiven and they can receive His free gift of salvation and eternal life.

Questions for workshop participants:

1. What barriers and obstacles do you see in _____ (country specific) to bringing people with disabilities to Jesus Christ?

2. What do you feel you can do as Christ’s church to overcome some of these obstacles and remove barriers to bring people with disabilities to Jesus?



Who Are the Disabled?

The United Nations estimates 10 % of the world's population—approximately 650 million people, of which 200 million are children—experience some form of disability. They make up the highest proportion of the world's disadvantaged population. Many live in unbelievable poverty and isolation!



The vast majority of people with disabilities are excluded from schools, churches, and opportunities to work, as well as poverty reduction programs and HIV and AIDS information and services. As many as 80% of working age people with disabilities are unemployed. They make up 15–20 % of the poorest communities. They live marginalized, in isolation, and often have to beg as their sole means of survival.

Disabled adults and children are three times more likely to be victims of sexual violence and rape. Other factors, such as physical dependence, life in institutions, and lack of access to legal rights, also make them particularly vulnerable to infection and abuse.

References

1. *UN Report on Disability and Rehabilitation*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A DISABILITY?

Question for workshop participants:

What is your personal current definition and understanding of disability?

Definition of Disability

In America, the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities, such as walking, speaking, seeing, hearing, etc. Being limited in any one of these activities will, in turn, affect the person's ability to participate in social, recreational, and employment opportunities.

The United Nations uses a definition of disability that is different from the ADA:

*Definition has been paraphrased by trainer to clarify meaning

Impairment: Any loss of mental or physical makeup or function.

Disability: Any limitation resulting from an impairment or disability that limits one's ability to perform an activity which is considered typical for a person of the same age, sex and development.

Handicap: A disadvantage for a person, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents them from functioning in their community that is considered typical, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual. Handicap is a function of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment. It occurs when they encounter cultural, physical, or social barriers which prevent their access to the various systems of society that are available to other citizens. Thus, handicap is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others.

Causes of Disability

The causes of disability are the same throughout most of the world. They are mainly caused by malnutrition (poverty), infectious diseases (e.g., polio, measles, malaria, leprosy, river blindness, etc.), and low inoculation and immunization rates. Polio is the most predominant disabling disease in the world.

Accidents, land mines, conflicts, and wars are also important causes of disability in countries like Africa and in the Middle East.

A disability can be the result of a birth defect (physical or mental impairment) that occurs during the development of the baby in the mother's womb or from birth injuries due to poor care during the pregnancy or during the delivery. Also, disability can happen from environmental factors such as disease, trauma, environmental hazards, and accidents that one may experience in childhood or adulthood.



Common Disabilities Experienced Around the World

Physical Disabilities: A physical disability is a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical (mobility) activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying.

Polio: The most common cause of a physical disability in many developing countries is polio. Polio is a virus (infection) that attacks the spinal cord, where it damages the nerves that control movement. It causes paralysis in parts of the body.

Polio is not contagious after the first two weeks from when a child gets sick with polio. Most polio is spread through the stool of non-paralyzed children who only have a cold caused by the polio virus. Where sanitation is better, polio is spread through coughing and sneezing.

The secondary complications (further disabling conditions) that appear after and because of polio are contractures of joints. A contracture is a shortening of muscles and tendons so that the full range of limb movement is prevented. Typical contractures in polio are bending at the ankle, foot, hip, knee, elbow, wrist, and fingers. When a child crawls around on the ground because of paralysis due to polio, he or she will gradually develop these contractures.

Missing limb: Many men, women, and children may be born with missing limbs or are victims of environmental factors such as: accidents, land mine injuries, or amputations (surgical loss) that have caused them to have a missing limb(s).

Cerebral Palsy: A disorder caused by damage to the brain. “Cerebral” means the damage is in the area of the brain that controls movement and posture. “Palsy” refers to muscle weakness and inability to make voluntary movements.

Some common characteristics are:

- ❖ Rigidity; muscles are tight and resist moving
- ❖ Tremors; the muscles shake
- ❖ Poor muscle control
- ❖ Poor use of hands
- ❖ Difficulty with speech
- ❖ Paralysis (“hemi” one side of the body, or “quad” - all four limbs)
- ❖ Lack of coordination
- ❖ Lack of balance
- ❖ More than half will also have mental retardation

** Not every person with cerebral palsy will have every characteristic.*



Blindness or visual impairment:

Totally Blind: A person who is totally blind has no vision. They cannot see.

Visually Impaired: A person who is visually impaired may have some or very little vision, but needs assistance such as corrective lenses, a magnifier, or large print to employ vision in learning.

Some common causes of blindness:

Trachoma (infectious disease) is the most common cause of preventable blindness in the world. It often begins in children and may last for months or years. It is spread by touch or flies and is most common in poor or crowded areas.

“Dry Eyes” (nutritional blindness) is a common cause of child blindness in parts of Africa and Asia. It results when a child does not get enough Vitamin A, which occurs naturally in many fruits and vegetables (and also in milk, meats and eggs).

River Blindness is a very common cause of blindness in parts of Africa. It is spread by a kind of black fly (bacteria in the worm larvae) that breeds in rivers and streams.

Deaf and Hearing Impaired:

Deaf: A person who is deaf does not hear sound, even with amplification. He relies on sight for learning and communication.

Hearing Impaired: A person with a hearing impairment, which may range from mild to severe hearing loss, can still depend on the auditory channel (hearing) for learning and communicating; however, the hearing loss greatly affects their learning.

Causes of Deafness: Deafness is not caused because a child or person did something wrong or because someone is being punished.

Common causes:

- ❖ Hereditary (occurs in certain families).
- ❖ Premature birth (born early and small).
- ❖ Ear infections, especially long-lasting, repeated infections with pus.
- ❖ Meningitis.

Intellectual Disabilities / Mental Retardation: Refers to a developmental disability that substantially limits a person in life skills. It is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with limitations in life skills such as: communication, self care, home living, social skills, academics, work, and recreation.

Mental Retardation:

- ❖ Is not a disease. It cannot be caught.
- ❖ It is not mental illness.
- ❖ It is permanent.

The most common syndrome with the characteristic of mental retardation is Down syndrome.

Down syndrome is one of the most recognizable syndrome that involves mental retardation. There are three kinds of Down syndrome that all involve a genetic chromosomal disorder. The most common (95%) chromosomal abnormality is "Trisomy 21". In this case, an extra twenty-first chromosome is present on every cell of the body.

Some of the physical characteristics of a person with Down syndrome are:

- ❖ Smaller than their peers
- ❖ Slanted eyes
- ❖ Short neck
- ❖ Small head
- ❖ Short, low set ears
- ❖ A flat bridge on the nose

Causes of Mental Retardation:

Prenatal (before birth)

- ❖ Genetic.
- ❖ Malnutrition during pregnancy.
- ❖ One or more abortions in the mother's past.





Perinatal (during birth)

- ❖ Anoxia (oxygen deprivation) caused by the position of the umbilical cord, a breech birth, low birth weight, premature birth.

Postnatal (after birth)

- ❖ Childhood diseases, such as meningitis, or accidents (blow to the head).
- ❖ Environmental: poverty, malnutrition, toxins, poor medical care.

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism also known as Autistic Disorder is a developmental disability that affects a person in three primary areas:

- ❖ social interaction
- ❖ language skills
- ❖ repetitive behaviors or interests

The difficulties in these primary areas will be evident before the age of three. It is important to realize that the level of severity in autism varies greatly from individual to individual. A person with Autism may be high functioning with a genius IQ without you being aware of any symptoms. Another person may be extremely lower functioning with a low IQ and needs much care and assistance for daily living.

In addition to Autism, an individual may be given another diagnosis within the category of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- ❖ Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) – a person has some symptoms of autism but not enough to carry the classical diagnosis of autism
- ❖ Asperger's Syndrome – A person has autistic behaviors but has good language skills
- ❖ Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD) – a child who appears to be developing normally for a few years, but then loses skills and develops autistic behaviors

Prevention of Disability

- ❖ Awareness campaigns about the importance of good dietary and food preparation habits.
- ❖ Improve maternal health.
- ❖ Improve nutritional standards of meals for children.
- ❖ Take precautions for safety at work and in the home.
- ❖ Control infectious diseases through immunizations.
- ❖ Improve access to healthcare and rehabilitation services.

References

1. *Through the Roof Manual* – Joni and Friends International Disability Center
2. *Disabled Village Children* – David Werner
3. *Exceptional Teaching* – Dr. Jim Pierson
4. *Autism and Your Church* – Barbara J. Newman



HOW DOES THE WORLD VIEW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Two of the greatest influences that affect how we view people with disabilities are our background and knowledge.

Background and Knowledge

Our family and community. The way family members and people in our communities perceive people with disabilities may very strongly influence our own perceptions.

Our education. The things we have learned tend to have a powerful impact on the way we think and feel.

Our religious and cultural upbringing influences our attitudes.

A lack of accurate information or facts about people with disabilities can cause us to develop wrong attitudes.

Religions of the World and Social Systems

In certain religions or social systems people with disabilities are shunned, viewed as cursed, an object of charity, shame, dishonor, lowest class of society.

Here's how some religions and social systems view people with disabilities:

- ❖ **Hinduism** – A disabled person is “bad karma”. Such a person is of the lowest caste.
- ❖ **Islam** – A disabled person is an object of charity or disgrace in a “shame and honor” culture. A disability is that person’s fate (ghadar).
- ❖ **Communism** – A disabled person cannot contribute to society; he or she has no use.
- ❖ **Buddhism** – A disabled person should deny and ignore his or her plight.
- ❖ **Spiritism** – A disabled person has been cursed.
- ❖ **Secular Humanism** – A disabled person is a victim and to integrate them into society is considered a significant expense.
- ❖ **Fascism** – A disabled person is an economic drain on society.
- ❖ **Religious Legalism** – A disabled person is an object of charity. He or she is the focus of ministry projects which highlight results rather than relationships. However, the real needs of disabled people are the responsibility of the government, not the religious community.



Social Stigma, Taboo, and Curses

Social Stigma

Disability in Africa and in other parts of the world is seen as a stigma - a mark of disgrace in the family, bringing bad luck, or a punishment for sin that the parents have done. As a result, disabled people are often excluded from education, employment, services, social and community activities. They are virtually guaranteed to live out their lives as the poorest of the poor.

The social stigma associated with disability results in marginalization, discrimination, and isolation, often leading to individuals with disabilities begging for their sole survival. Alms are given to the disabled person as a means of obtaining spiritual grace and forgiveness for the non-disabled person.

Taboo

Some definitions of taboo are:

1. A prohibition imposed by social (societal/tribal/religious) customs.
2. Prohibition against touching, saying, or doing something for fear of immediate harm from a supernatural force.
3. Something prohibited by a taboo.

Curse

A calamity/disaster brought down by someone on another, usually invoking a higher being (deity).

In some African cultures, taboo is tribal law. Breaking a taboo brings a curse. A person or mythical deity pronounces a curse. The object of the curse is a person or family. Because of this curse, something bad happens to the person or family upon whom the curse was placed. In this way of thinking, a disability happens to a person or family as a result of a curse. Believing that this disability is a result of the curse, all of the people in the community accept that decision. As a result, the person lives marginalized and in isolation in their community.



What Does God's Word (Bible) Teach Us About Curses?

In the book of Deuteronomy 28:15-19 we read: "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the off-spring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out..."

Under the Old Covenant prior to Christ's coming, death, and resurrection, God's people were given His laws to abide by. They were under the Old Covenant law (Ten Commandments/Mosaic Law). If they obeyed His laws and statutes, they would be blessed; if they disobeyed His laws and statutes, they would be cursed.

But, Christ came to die for all of mankind's sin and disobedience—past, present, and future. He came to redeem us from the curse of the law, reconcile man back to God, and establish a new covenant through Him.

Galatians 3:13-14

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing [salvation/ freedom from sin] of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Since Christ's coming, death and resurrection, mankind is no longer under the law and subject to the curses of the law, but we are in a season of grace to receive the free gift of salvation in Christ Jesus. Therefore, God's Word reveals to us that disability could not be a curse as a result of sin in the person or family. Christ died for our sins and redeemed us from the curses of the law.

Proverbs 26:2

“Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight.” Because of what Christ has done, a curse shall not land nor do us no harm, just as a bird flying over our head.

Being born with a disability or becoming disabled is not the result of a curse but just one of the many effects from the fall of man (original sin of Adam) that gave birth to sin, sickness, disease, and death on the earth. It is not the result of one’s personal, family, or ancestor’s sin. Jesus has already paid the price for all mankind. Bless His holy name for all eternity!



References

1. *Through the Roof Manual* – Joni Eareckson Tada & Steve Jensen (Joni and Friends International Disability Center)
2. *Ministry Among People with Disabilities (Occasional paper #35)* – Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization
3. *Taboo and Disability* – Mary Jane Ponten (Mephibosheth Ministries)
4. *Created in The Image of God* – James Rene (Joni and Friends International Disability Center)

Roundtable Discussion Questions:

1. How do you and your community currently view people with disabilities?

2. What are some of the factors (background, knowledge, religious and social systems) that have influenced you and your community’s view of people with disabilities? Be specific.



HOW DOES GOD VIEW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

Created in the Image of God for Him

Genesis 1:26, 27

26 “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

27 “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Colossians 1:15, 16

15 “Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation.”

16 “Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him.

So we see here in God’s Word that every man, woman, and child is created in the image and likeness of God. We all bear His image and likeness. We bear His image not in our physical man for God is spirit and has no physical form, but we bear His image in our inward spirit man as spiritual beings. After the Fall, this image became deeply marred; but it was never lost. Human beings turned away from God and became his enemies by nature. By the redemptive work of Christ, God graciously restores his image in human beings, making their will and desire one with His. He accomplishes this incredible work through the work of his sovereign grace.

The goal of the Christian life, then, is to become more like Christ who is the perfect image of God, and we become more like him by practicing sacrificial love as He did (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10; 1 John 3:16). This ultimately means that we, the church of Jesus Christ, must love all people—from those who are disabled or who are not disabled — to those who do not know their own name. Why? Because they bear God’s image and He loves them. It is as simple and as profound as that. This is what it means to love as He loved.

We also see that we were created by Him and for Him. God has revealed to us throughout His Word that He created us to have relationship with Him, to be His people, to worship and glorify Him, to love God with all our hearts and to love one another as He loves us as God’s family.



Psalms 139:13–16

13 *You made my whole being; you formed me in my mother's body.*

14 *I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What you have done is wonderful. I know this very well.*

15 *You saw my bones being formed as I took shape in my mother's body. When I was put together there,*

16 *you saw my body as it was formed. All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old.*

Jeremiah 1:5

"Before I made you in your mother's womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work..."

Exodus 4:11

"So the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?'"

So we see that not only did God create us as spiritual beings in His image, but also it is God who forms our physical man while we were in our mother's womb. God tells us we are all fearfully and wonderfully made and all His works are wonderful. Whether we have a physical or mental disability, all of us in our uniqueness, with our physical, mental, and spiritual abilities, are beautifully and wonderfully made for His purposes.

What God sees as wonderfully made is different than what man sees. Man looks at the outward man and what he does; God looks at the heart of man and who he is—one who is created in His image for His glory. There are no disabled souls!

Tearing Down the Misconception About People with Disabilities

Tragically, throughout the ages and in many parts of the world today people with disabilities are looked upon as mistakes or those who have been cursed, the result of personal sin or the sins of their parents or ancestors. As a result, they are rejected, isolated, and live as outcasts of society.

Jesus Christ, who is God the Son and the express image of God our father, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, has revealed and settled this misconception.

John 9:1–3

1 *Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.*

2 *And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?"*

3 *Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."*

The blind man from birth was not the result of his sin or his parent's sin but he was born that the works of God would be revealed in him. God had created him for his purposes. So it is with you and me.



The works and glory of God are still being revealed in the lives of those who are disabled, whether it is through God performing a physical miracle or the miracle of one receiving and being a witness to God's love and salvation, or the works of God manifesting through their natural and spiritual abilities and gifting.

God Desires His Church to Reach Disabled People

Luke 14:15–23 Parable of the great supper

15 *Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*

16 *Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many,*

17 *and sent his servant at suppertime to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'*

18 *But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'*

19 *And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'*

20 *Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'*

21 *So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, **Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.***

22 *And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'*

23 *Then the master said to the servant, **'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'***



God uses parables (stories in the natural realm) in His Word to teach us and help us understand spiritual truths concerning Himself and His kingdom.

The certain man in this parable represents God, and His invitation to His great supper represents God inviting all men to come to Him and have a relationship with Him.

So we see a powerful truth in this parable that God desires that His house be filled. His invitation is to all people, including the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. God has asked us to go out into the world and especially reach out and compel those who are disabled to receive His free gift of salvation and eternal life, to come to His house and enter His kingdom.

God Desires Disabled People to Serve His Kingdom

1 Corinthians 12: 12, 22-23

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body who seem to be weaker are necessary (indispensable);

23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable.

God reveals to us in His Word that those who are weaker, those who are without strength, and those who are disabled, who many feel are less honorable or presentable, those are the ones on whom God bestows greater honor and are necessary for his kingdom.

God desires to reveal His greatness, strength, and love through those who are disabled. His Word tells us that his strength is made perfect in weakness. God has chosen those who are weak to confound those who are strong.



Did Jesus Reach Out and Minister to Disabled People?

Out of the 35 recorded miracles of Jesus in the New Testament, three were people Jesus raised from the dead and nine were miracles which broke the natural laws of physics—including turning water into wine, feeding the 5000, walking on water and calming a storm. The remaining 23 miracles involved people with disabilities: six involved mental illness and the remaining 17 involved physical issues such as blindness, deafness, paralysis, a withered hand, and leprosy. That gives a clue to the heart of God for people with disabilities and an indication of the priority He gave them.

Jesus went out of His way to encounter and include people with disabilities, because He knew how much they may contribute to any family and how vital every individual is to their community. Breaking down barriers and seeing the value of each person helps us to become the true family that God intends us to be (Mark 2:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 12: 22-23).

References

- 1. Created in His Image – James Rene (Joni and Friends International Disability Center)*
- 2. So That My House Will Be Full – Joni and Friends International Disability Center*



WHAT ABOUT THE ISSUE OF HEALING AND DEMONIZATION?

A Biblical View

Disability has often been misunderstood to be the result of punishment or a curse due to one's personal sin, ancestor's sin, or demonization. Although there are very few biblical examples that a disability was caused by one of these means, we must look at the whole counsel of scripture (Old and New Testament) in the context of the Old and New Covenant to recognize these are not definitive explanations of the cause of all disabilities. In Exodus 4:11, we read God's response to Moses when He was trying to back out of His calling as the deliver of Israel because of his speech problem: *"So the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?'"* Clearly, we see in God's response, His sovereign hand in those that are born with disabilities, dispelling the misconception that all people with disabilities must be the result of personal sin, generational curse, or a demon. In the New Testament, we read a case where Jesus Himself addressed this misconception. In John 9:1–5, Jesus' disciples asked if the cause of a man born blind was because of his sin or His parent's sin. Jesus said no... *but this happened so that the work of God would be revealed in him.*



The majority of cases of disability we see in the Bible and that are experienced throughout the world are caused by a person being born with a genetic or chromosomal disorder, or the results of sickness, disease, poverty, malnutrition, accidents, conflicts, wars, and other environmental factors—all which are the result of the fall of man (original sin of Adam). Because of the original sin of Adam, mankind died spiritually and is bruised physically and mentally becoming vulnerable to sickness, disease, genetic and chromosomal disorders, effects of sin, and will experience physical death. Disability, along with sin, sickness, disease, and physical death are all effects of the fall of man. (Genesis 2:17, 3:19, Romans 6:23)

Should We Pray for Healing for People Affected by Disability?

The Bible clearly teaches us to pray for the sick and the suffering. (Mark 6:13, James 5:14, Mark 16:18). God has revealed Himself as Jehovah Rapha (The Lord Our Healer) and He will heal sickness, disease, and perform creative miracles according to His sovereign purposes.

God may also choose not to heal a person while on earth for reasons we do not always understand. It is a mystery why some receive healing and some do not. His ways are far above our ways! What we do understand clearly in God's word is that His ultimate desire and priority is to heal the soul of man. This takes place through one becoming born again (receiving salvation) by accepting His son Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. This is the greatest miracle! God desires that all men would be saved and transformed into the image of His son. Our outward man is perishing (aging - becoming weaker and will eventually die) but our inward man will grow from glory to glory. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

The focus and priority for Christ's church should be spiritual healing and transformation of the soul by ministering the gospel and teaching God's word and ways. Whether God heals the disabled person physically

while on earth or chooses to be glorified and reveal His power through their weakness for eternal purposes is up to Him. Again, His ways are far above our ways. He works out everything in conformity to His will for eternity. Concerning our physical bodies, God has purposed that we will all receive a glorified body in heaven for eternity. (1 Cor. 15:51-53, 2 Corinthians 5:1-2)

A Word on Demonization:

The Bible clearly teaches us that Satan is “the god of this age” and his principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness (fallen angels / demonic entities) are at war with the Kingdom of God desiring to destroy mankind on the earth. (Matt 16:18, Ephes. 6: 11-12, John 10:10, 1 Peter 5:8, James 4:7). They have been defeated by Christ’s work on the cross and will be eternally damned in the lake of fire, yet until then, they are trying to destroy and take as many human souls with them as possible. Scripture reveals demonic activity such as: to tempt to do evil, harass, torment, and oppress, and can afflict a person with mental oppression or a physical infirmity. We see examples in scripture where a demon spirit gained access into a person’s soul (mind, will, and emotions) or physical body, and Christ or His disciples ministered healing and freedom to them.

The tragedy throughout the generations around the world is to falsely believe and diagnose that the cause of all disabilities is due to demonization or a curse. Many people with disabilities around the world have been improperly taken to deliverance sessions at churches, healing ministry meetings, and miracle crusades for demons to be cast out of them and for curses to be broken. Yet, the obvious causes are clearly known and seen. They were either born with the disability caused by a genetic /chromosomal disorder, or became disabled as a result of sickness, disease, malnutrition, accidents, etc... When the healing or creative miracle does not take place through the deliverance or healing ministry, the disabled person leaves stigmatized and is excluded from or marginalized in their communities and Christ’s church.

Can a disabled person become affected by demonic activity or become demonized? Yes, just as any other person who gives place to the devil. (Lives in gross sin, worships false Gods, practices witchcraft/occultism, etc.) Satan and the kingdom of darkness also preys on the most vulnerable – the weak, infirmed, and the disabled. Even though a disabled person is not living in gross sin or worshipping false Gods, the shame, rejection, emotional wounds, living in isolation, and constant barrage of negative words spoken and images of no value placed upon them can make them vulnerable to demonic strongholds or oppression. We must remember however, that in the majority of cases where Jesus brought healing to

someone with a disability, it was not caused by demonic oppression. God forbid that we add to the work of Satan by projecting our false misconceptions, un-Biblical teaching, and often well-meaning yet incorrect ministry by labeling a disabled person as demonized. Let us be true ministers of the Holy Spirit with Biblical truth, discernment, order, love, compassion, grace, and mercy to whom our Lord has called with urgency to reach—Men, women, and children affected by disability. “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.” “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Luke 14: 21, 23





SUCCESSFUL MODELS OF DISABILITY MINISTRY

Personal Models

It is difficult to change people's ungodly attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Whether in the church, local community, or society at large, attitudes find their root in the heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, ... **guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.** God charges each Christian to personally model His attitude: **Do nothing out of ... vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.** Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:3-5)

The following are personal guidelines for a Christian to follow when encountering a disabled person or his family.

- ❖ Review in the Gospels the example of Jesus and how He treated disabled persons. Ask several Christians to pray for you as you endeavor to reach out to the disabled in your community.
- ❖ Don't assume the worst; assume the best about the person. Have a positive outlook. The practice of negative thinking has no value (see 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
- ❖ Do not look at the person's impairment; look into the eyes and smile.
- ❖ Reach out and touch the person, if not with a handshake, then with a hand on the shoulder. Do not pat a person's head as you would a child.
- ❖ Do not shout at a blind man; he can hear you.
- ❖ Use a pencil and paper to communicate with a deaf person. If they cannot read, you can draw pictures.
- ❖ Communicate with the disabled person as you would anyone else, asking about family, home, or other interests. Do not talk only about the disability.
- ❖ Invite the person to church and ask questions as to how you and your church might make his or her visit a positive experience. If he or she uses a wheelchair, it may be necessary to construct a ramp (using boards). If he or she walks using his or her hands, remember the lesson of James 2:2-4.
- ❖ Visit the disabled person in his or her home. This will give you a clear idea of the needs of the family. Find a way to help the family. They also are weary and isolated. In Proverbs 31:8-9, God calls us to advocate on behalf of the disabled.
- ❖ Introduce the disabled person to another member of your congregation.

Modeling God's Love through the Church

When it comes to evangelism among disabled people and their families, the gospel cannot be given in word only; it must be accompanied by action. Disabled people who experience God's love through the alleviating or sharing of their burden usually remain true to the faith. Evangelism among the disabled which lacks the "relief of a burden" rarely lasts.



When designing a program for disabled people, your church should start “small.” Most of the models listed in this section follow the design of a “Seed Project.” A Seed Project is a useful, practical way to develop an evangelism outreach to disabled people in your community.

- ❖ A “Seed Project” is a small outreach done by the local church into their community using local resources.
- ❖ Any seed project should have a clear message to the people being served that the love of Jesus is the motivation. Present the gospel to people who seem open.
- ❖ As opposed to “proclamation evangelism,” this is demonstration evangelism.

Church Outreach

Disability Awareness Sunday

This special Sunday morning church service is designed to reach out to unsaved people with disabilities and their families. Design the service with evangelism in mind. Challenge your church members to reach out to disabled people and their families in the community inviting them to church. Preach a sermon on the subject of how God views people with disabilities. Ask a disabled person to share how they came to Christ. After church, hold a small lunch with a question and answer session for unchurched disabled people.

Build a Ramp Day

Make your church ready to welcome wheelchair users by asking skilled workmen in your congregation to build a ramp or widen doorways. They may wonder why they are doing this, since no one with a wheelchair comes to the church. Explain in a short Bible study how God wants us to prepare a place for His people. Use the passage in Luke 14.

Community Outreach

Take believers from your congregation, including people with disabilities, to visit people who are disabled in your community to encourage them, build a relationship, and share the gospel. The outreach may take place in a rehabilitation center, hospital, or in people’s homes.



Luke 14 Banquet

Design a banquet in the manner of Luke 14: 12- 14: “Then Jesus said to his host, ‘When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’”

Recruit a team of people to prepare food and decorate tables. Design centerpieces for the tables and create a small gift basket. Then invite a set number of disabled people and their family members to attend a banquet at your church. Hold a short program sharing the gospel and highlighting a testimony of a disabled person who has found salvation and hope in Jesus Christ.

Sports and Recreation Day

Invite disabled youth in community for a day of games and sports, etc.

- ❖ Find a venue.
- ❖ Recruit volunteers to help provide transportation, prepare activities, lead games, prepare a meal, assist with disabled people, create invitations, etc.
- ❖ Invite both able bodied and disabled youth.
- ❖ Play games such as wheelchair basketball or goal ball/soccer.



Foot Washing Service

In many developing nations, disabled people do not have mobility equipment, but must “crawl” on their hands and knees —and these people “walk” using flip flops or slippers on their hands while supporting their weight with their knees. Your church can design a community outreach to these disabled people by holding a foot washing service (involving feet, legs, and knees). During this service, give a message from John 13:5-14.

- ❖ Use volunteers who have a background in medical work or working with disabled people.
- ❖ Administer basic first aid to any part of a disabled person’s limbs which have become sore or bruised. Complete the foot washing with lotion. Give small gifts to the disabled people and make certain to welcome them back for another church service.

Love Gift Distribution Day

Plan an evangelism outreach to disabled people through the giving of love gifts. Distribute gifts such as literature, food, toiletry items, etc. Steps to take:

1. Encourage the congregation to pray for weeks before beginning a project. Find 15 people with disabilities in the community who have pressing needs or who are unable to leave their homes. Determine what sort of gift would be most appropriate and whether or not the family would be open to a visit, etc.
2. Send teams of 2 people, including disabled people on the outreach teams, if possible, to visit a person with a disability with a love gift, food, a short worship service, or a simple expression of friendship, such as reading a book or playing musical instruments.
3. Follow up!!!! Use this outreach to build a relationship. Teams should be committed to visiting on a regular basis.



Marketplace Outreach

Involve your church in constructing ramps for the areas of your village marketplace which are inaccessible to people with disabilities. As your church members build the ramp, distribute Scripture tracts to passersby. A complete resource guide which provides instruction for building ramps can be located through the UN Program on Disability, the lead program on disability within the United Nations system. It is housed in the division for Social Policy and Development at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat. You can access this manual at www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/designm/.

Wheels for the World Outreach

In select countries, *Wheels for the World*, an International Outreach of the Joni and Friends International

Disability Center, partners with local churches and disability organizations to distribute and fit wheelchairs, share the gospel of Jesus Christ, and provide Bibles to needy men, women, and children with disabilities.

A *Wheels for the World* Outreach includes evangelism by local pastors and disability ministry training in churches, rehab centers, and to centers of government etc. For more information, contact:

Joni and Friends International Disability Center

P.O. Box 3333 Agoura Hills, CA 91376. (U.S.A.)

Phone 1.818.707.5664

E-mail: sbuxton@joniandfriends.org



Advocacy Campaign

Proverbs 31:8–9 says, “Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy.” There may be laws in your city which discriminate against people with disabilities. There may be lack of access into public areas of your city. There may be employment practices or policies which are discriminatory. Cast the vision to the people in your congregation who are familiar with the law or the workings of the city government. Start an advocacy program with the goal of not only removing discrimination, but developing relationships and sharing Christ’s love with legislators, city councilors, and individuals in the mayor’s office.

UN Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities

Disability advocates around the world successfully brought before the United Nations delegates a new UN Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. This convention was adopted by the UN in December 2006 and member states are presently reviewing, signing, and ratifying this new international law. The JAF International Disability Center and other Christian pro-life organizations believe that as this new UN Convention is adopted country-by-country, its legal standards will help raise the quality of life for millions of people with disabilities: www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/conventioninfo.htm

References

1. *Ministry Among People with Disabilities (Occasional paper #35)* – Joni Eareckson Tada & Jack S. Oppenhuizen
2. *A Disability “Update”* – Joni Eareckson Tada, Senior Associate on Disability Concerns for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Group exercise (Break into Roundtables of 7–10)

Now that we've learned some basics to understanding disability and heard God's Word about His desire for His Church to reach out and include people with disabilities, let us honor God and create an action plan to minister to people with disabilities.

James 1:22 tells us: Be doers of the word, and not hearers only...

Creating an Action Plan

Write 1–2 goals for how you and your church will reach out to people with disabilities.

Goal 1

Goal 2

List two disability ministry models that you will plan and the action steps to get you started to meet your goals.

(Choose some ministry models we have learned about or write others to accomplish the same goal)

Disability Ministry Model # 1

Identify church leaders and workers who will be part of the team

Identify resources needed

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This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Close with a certificate ceremony, prayer, and the laying on of hands to commission them in the name of the Lord.

International Christian Organizations Serving People with Disabilities

Joni and Friends International Disability Center

P.O. Box 3333, Agoura Hills, CA 91376, USA

Phone: 1.818.707.5664 Fax: 1.818.707.2391

www.joniandfriends.org

Joni and Friends International Affiliates & Associates

http://www.joniandfriends.org/intl_field_services.php



PO Box 3333
Agoura Hills, CA 91376-3333

(818) 707-5664

Fax (818) 707-2391

TTY: (818) 707-9707

www.joniandfriends.org

Mission Statement

To communicate the Gospel and equip Christ-honoring Churches worldwide to evangelize and disciple people affected by disabilities.

