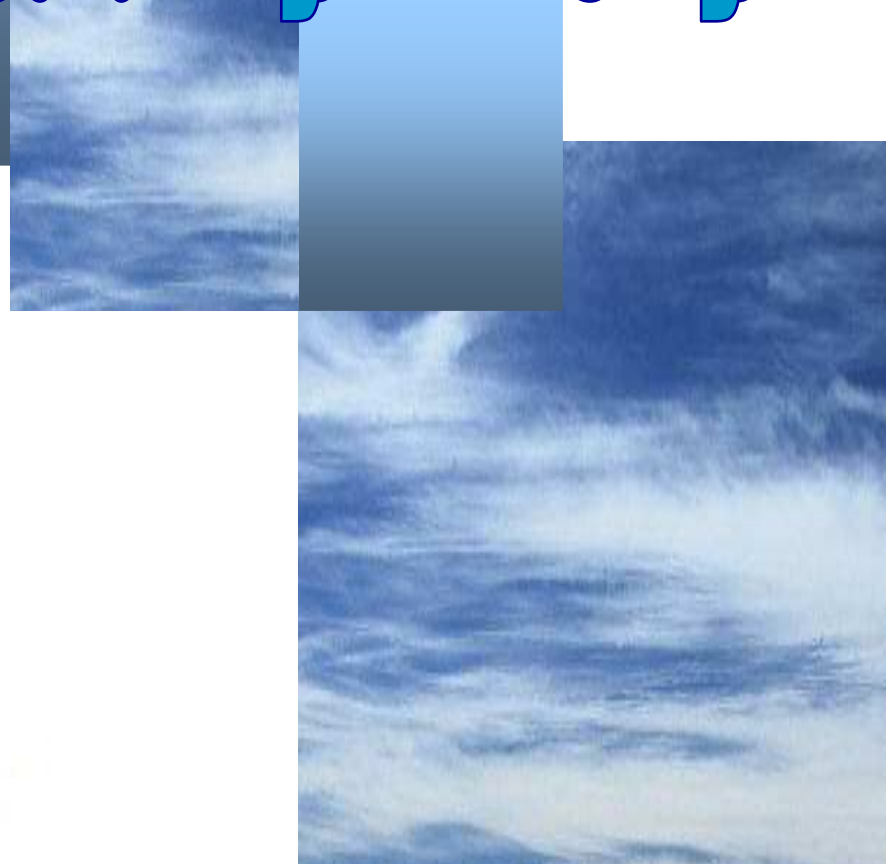


# Learning the Basics of Disability Ministry



# Learning the Basics of Disability Ministry

Christian Horizons is pleased to partner with CCFH to bring you the Canadian version of this great resource. Christian Horizons seeks to work with churches and families as they seek to support and minister to those with exceptional needs. For further information on disability ministry, please contact us at our office:

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## Introduction

If you are reading this publication, you must be planning to start or have already started a disability ministry. We praise your decision and want to assist you by providing some basic information in this six lesson study which is suitable for either an individual or group setting.

Throughout this book we may refer to Sunday school class or child. However, this material may also be used to address Christian education in a small group or other setting for learners of all ages. Do not let semantics limit your thinking. Use the materials to enhance your ministry no matter what the configuration.

There are several situations that may have triggered your starting a disability ministry. Among them may be:

- A couple has just joined your congregation, and their ten-year-old daughter has Down syndrome.
- One of the young couples in your church has recently had their first child, a little boy born with cerebral palsy.
- A teenager in your youth group has been involved in a head-on collision, sustaining a severe spinal cord injury. He is now a quadriplegic.
- One of the young mothers in your congregation has been informed that she has a rapidly progressing form of multiple sclerosis.
- One of the senior citizens in your church has just diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.
- A member of your congregation is being led to minister with families experiencing disability.
- A child or spouse of one of your members has a disability.

How will you accommodate people of all abilities in the life of YOUR church?

Whatever your reason for studying this material, we pray that you will use these lessons as you establish or strengthen your disability ministry, identify and train your volunteers, and follow the mandate set forth in Matthew 28: 18-20 NKJV.

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

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# Making the Idea a Reality

## Lesson 1

### In this lesson we will:

- A. Study the specific call for disability ministry.
- B. Review the principles of its foundation.
- C. Establish a plan – not a program.
- D. Consider some options.

The symptoms of some disabilities may be discernible only to the person affected; however, there is an impact on how they perform activities or roles. Learning of God's love, access to His Word, and participating in all phases of church life should be available to people of all abilities.

The Statistics Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2001, provides information that shows us the need is there:

"Survey results confirm that the disability rate gradually increases with age. From 3.3% among children aged 0 to 14, it rises to nearly 10% among adults aged 15 to 64 and climbs to more than 40% among persons aged 65 and over. In fact, more than half (53.3%) of persons 75 and over report having a disability. Within the population aged 15 to 64, this gradual increase is reflected in a rate of about 4% among young adults 15 to 24 years of age, compared to 7.1% among persons aged 25 to 44 and 16.7% among those aged 45 to 64."<sup>1</sup>

Those with disabilities and their families disproportionately face more difficulties than their typical counterparts. The church, while seeking to bring all into a right relationship with our Creator and Savior, must extend a special hand of fellowship.

This information validates the need for inclusive, far-reaching, and life-changing ministry with people who have disabilities in *every* community!

## The Theory and Practice of Inclusion

In recent years, several factors have changed public attitude toward and influenced the care of people with disabilities. Many of these changes came about because of public laws. For example, a section of a 1975 law, the "Mandatory Education Act of all Handicapped Children, Public Law 94-142" (now called "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act"), requires that children be educated in the least restrictive environment. The concept of mainstreaming, coupled with the philosophy of normalization,

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<sup>1</sup> *Prevalence of Disability in Canada*. Retrieved March 2, 2009 from [http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-577-x/4151361-eng.htm#disability\\_rate](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-577-x/4151361-eng.htm#disability_rate).

opened many facets of the community to individuals with disabilities. The basic concept is inclusion.

In 1992, the trend continued when the Americans with Disabilities Act opened the business community and provided a new sensitivity to the real needs of people with disabilities. The Special Olympics has demonstrated that achieving and winning are not just for people without disabilities. With this new climate existing in America, the church must be aware of the changes and offer plans that reflect these trends.

A few years ago the basic unit of disability ministry was a Sunday school class for children or adults with mental retardation. These students were taught in a self-contained classroom. Seasonal and other occasional activities were provided but usually not with their age mates or other members of the Sunday school. Mainstreaming has taught us that interacting with typical students has a positive influence on students with cognitive disabilities. For example, they model more socially acceptable behaviors and not the behaviors that create negative reactions. The new approach for Christian education, as in public school, is inclusion.

However, meeting the spiritual needs of people with disabilities is more important than adhering to the philosophy of inclusion. The purpose of Christian education is to convey to learners the wonderful Good News that Jesus loves them. Learning should take place in the best setting to accomplish this purpose. The experience can be designed to maximize the opportunity for every person with a disability to learn, not just be enrolled in a program with the "correct philosophy."

### **A Plan — Not a Program**

The ideal ministry with persons with disabilities and their families would not be a special program, but rather a plan for including persons with disabilities and their families in activities that already exist, devising supplementary strategies to meet exceptional needs.

The goal should be ministry in action to meet the diverse needs of diverse people. Do not limit your ability to meet needs by being rigid or by lack of information: be creative!

Consider a congregation that has mid-week Bible studies in the homes of the church elders. Fred, a quadriplegic, Missy, a young woman who is deaf, Sidney, a middle-aged man who has a cognitive disability, and Tim and Marianne, the parents of a nine-month-old infant with multiple disabilities, would all like to be involved in the mid-week studies. In the past, the congregation's response would have been to design a special study just for them or to simply exclude them from participation. However, in today's era of inclusion, the congregation's response will be to make already existing studies accessible to Fred, Missy, Sidney, Tim, and Marianne.

Fred, who lives on the west end of town, will attend Dave and Cindy's study. They also live on the west end of town. Fred's attendant will drive him and will sit with him to care for his needs during the study (a great way to evangelize the attendant)! The

church will pay to have a portable ramp constructed so that Fred can negotiate steps into Dave and Cindy's home. Dave and Cindy will be certain that the room where the study group will meet has ample space for Fred to maneuver his electric wheelchair. The bathrooms in Dave and Cindy's home are inaccessible, but since all Fred needs is a place of privacy where his attendant can empty his leg bag, Dave and Cindy will be sure one of the bedrooms is available. Fred wants to carry out the same responsibilities as the rest of the group (he does not want to feel "special"), so he expects to be included on the refreshment list and to sometimes be called on to offer the opening or closing prayer.

Missy is independent as far as driving is concerned, so she can get herself to and from the study that meets across town. Missy chose this study because several men and women who attend are single and in their thirties as she is. There are no accessibility issues as far as Missy is concerned, but the church will pay for a licensed sign language interpreter to attend the study and interpret for Missy. (As a sidelight, the church will sponsor sign language classes so that Missy's hearing friends can learn how to communicate with her more effectively and so that the church can begin to train its own team of interpreters.) Like Fred, Missy does not want to be considered "special" and expects to carry out the same responsibilities as any other group member would.

Sidney would like to attend the Bible study that meets near his group home. Church members who attend this study will share in picking up Sidney and taking him home. They will also take turns sitting next to Sidney during the study, assisting him in locating passages in his Bible and helping him to feel welcome and accepted. Just like all the other members who attend this study, Sidney will take his turn at bringing refreshments. When it is his turn, a member of the group will take Sidney shopping so that he may choose what he would like to bring. Sidney will also be asked on a regular basis to offer the opening or closing prayer, like everyone else in the group.

Tim and Marianne would like to attend a Bible study where they can meet with other couples with young children. They have been afraid to get involved with other groups and activities in the church because of the individual attention their infant son requires. But the church has taken volunteers from the youth group, singles group, and senior citizens' groups and trained them specifically to care for baby Timmy's needs. A team of two will care for Timmy in another room in the home where the Bible study meets so that Tim and Marianne will be close by in case of an emergency.

As you can see, it is not always necessary to create a new plan to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and their families. All you need is to allow flexibility and creativity. There may be some instances where designing and implementing a new plan is the best way to meet needs. For example, parents who are caring for adult children with developmental disabilities may need to have an evening once a month when their adult children will be cared for at the church. Allowing the parents to go out to dinner, see a movie, or visit with friends would be a welcomed relief. Designing and implementing a specialized plan to meet this need would be tremendous!

But even when you do implement a plan like this, be careful not to develop a mindset that allows you to pigeonhole all families with disabled students. For example, Tim and Marianne would benefit greatly from having an evening out every once in a while as well, but a plan designed to care for adults with developmental disabilities is not going to be appropriate for their infant son. Using the care providers that were trained to care for Timmy during the mid-week Bible study would be an excellent solution for providing Tim and Marianne an occasional evening for themselves. For other parents of young children with disabilities, providing care in their home so that they can go out on a "date" would be a welcomed and greatly appreciated ministry. So, it is important to note that even when you have a specialized plan in place, you still must maintain the flexibility and creativity to accommodate exceptional circumstances.

## **Look at some considerations**

### **Special needs room**

A good way to accomplish the inclusion approach in a church setting is with a period of transition called "the special needs room." The special needs room will serve as home base for all students with disabilities. Their individual spiritual needs will be the prime concern of the inclusion staff. A lead staff member, with as many assistants as needed, will coordinate the activities. If the student needs a time of orientation to Christian education and church life, he/she will be trained by the teachers in the special needs room. After a student feels at home in the new surroundings, he can be included in an age-appropriate class or group. The teacher and the students in the typical class will be trained to help with the process. Until the student is comfortable in the mainstreamed class, a staff member or "buddy" should accompany him. If the student can be taught in a self-contained classroom, the staff should provide the opportunity as a regular part of the "inclusion unit."

The unit lends itself to variations of the mainstreaming approach. An option would be to have students from a typical Christian education class come to the unit to do peer tutoring. Learning Biblical truths that are difficult for learners with cognitive delays will be easier when done with an age mate. If this approach is used, the peer tutor should be thoroughly trained by the inclusion staff.

Further, there may be students whose needs are best met on a part time basis in a self-contained setting. In this case, the students should be included in as many activities with their age peers as possible. To illustrate, children could attend a puppet show being presented by a traveling group. Adults could attend a special music program for all adults in the auditorium.

Other activities will be accessible to learners with disabilities. The popular youth meeting will include youngsters with all levels of ability. Teaching Christian social graces, learning to evangelize friends, and experiencing fellowship are all as important to a person who is blind, deaf, or has a cognitive disability as to a person without a disability. Music departments will be available to all singers. Camps — weekday,

week long, and day camps — will offer spiritual nurture to campers with special needs. Creating support groups for families and students is a valid goal.

As the special needs staff works with people with disabilities and their families, they will discover many needs that can be met by the church. Respite care, housing, recreation activities, support groups, and counseling are common ones. Congregations are beginning to offer these services to persons in the community. As we return to a simpler, more personalized approach to ministry, these services will find many appreciative recipients.

### **Staffing impact**

Another change of the future will be staffing. Through the years of staffing ministries in the church, staff members have been added as needs arose. We have seen the addition of youth ministers, ministers to the elderly, ministers to children, etc. With people with disabilities being mainstreamed, the disability minister will become a part of the church staff. This change will call on institutions of higher learning to develop training courses. Churches will be asked to provide training internships. Textbooks will be written. A new Christian vocation is emerging.

As the need manifests itself, more churches will start ministries to people with disabilities. People who are blind, deaf, learning impaired, emotionally disturbed, physically disabled, or have health problems should be a part of the church. Our approach should reflect our Lord's instruction to go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come.

The field of disability ministry is changing and growing. The church should offer its services to members just as do other community organizations. When the Americans with Disabilities Act became law, the church was excluded. There is no law that says, "The church must serve persons with disabilities." On the other hand, there is a royal law that says, "Love your neighbor."

Gene Wigginton, former vice-president of Standard Publishing, suggests a theme for future ministry for persons with disabilities:

**"It is not the law; it is love."**

Prayer and the power it unleashes are essential to your efforts. Constantly bathe the progress of your church's disability ministry in prayer. Develop committed prayer groups. Set aside one evening a month to pray for the disability ministry. Gather together the task force, volunteers, and willing prayer warriors and join in a concert of prayer.

## Lesson 2

### In this lesson we will:

- A. Look beyond architectural barriers.
- B. Consider ministerial staff education.
- C. Review the twelve major steps for implementing a disability ministry.

### Overcoming Barriers

Most often, when people think of barriers to beginning a disability ministry, they think in terms of architectural barriers: doors that are not wide enough, stairways, and no elevators. Granted, these accessibility issues can be major barriers to the development of a disability ministry. They certainly are the most obvious barriers. But the real barriers are the ones that are hidden in the hearts and minds of people; the barriers that are reflected in their attitudes towards persons with disabilities and their families.

#### Apathy

***"We do not have anyone with a disability in our church, so why should we begin a disability ministry?"***

Challenge anyone who makes a statement like this to consider the question of *why* there is no one in the church with a disability.

When parents, siblings, spouses, and extended family members are considered, disability affects a large percentage of the population. Disability affects your community in the same proportion. People with disabilities are a segment of our society that is largely overlooked by our churches.

#### Excuses

***"We do not have anymore room."***

You should not need any. The best way to serve most people with disabilities is to include them in the already-existing classes. You may need to provide a buddy for students who have disabilities, to help them understand and participate in classroom activities, but you do not need a separate classroom.

If you do have one or a few students with severe disabilities, consider meeting in one of the staff offices. You might also consider offering a Bible-study class that takes place away from the church campus — in an individual's home or in residential facilities.

***"We cannot afford another ministry."***

It is a common misconception that disability ministry is more costly than other ministries in which a church is typically involved. Maintaining a disability ministry should be no more expensive than any other ministry the church provides.

For more extensive plans, seek donations from philanthropic organizations for specific activities such as respite care or a camp. A disability ministry can be quite cost efficient if planned and prepared wisely.

## **Ignorance**

### ***"These people can not learn anything. Why bother?"***

A disabled body does not necessarily mean a disabled mind. Even among those with a cognitive disability, 85 percent reach a mental age of at least 12 years. This is the age at which many people become Christians. People with a cognitive disability are capable of grasping spiritual truths on some level.

### ***"Our pastor will not support this ministry."***

The needs of persons with disabilities and their families and other disability-related issues are not generally a part of the coursework offered in Bible colleges and seminaries.

Offer educational material on disability ministry to your pastor. Give him articles to read. Arrange for him to meet with a family experiencing disability to learn firsthand what their lives are like. Find creative ways to get your pastor excited about disability ministry.

## **Pride**

### ***"But they are not like us."***

Who did Jesus spend the most time with? Certainly not with those who were "in His class." By that criterion, no one on earth would ever be worthy of Jesus' time! Yet He was and is a friend to sinners, outcasts, and those considered to be undesirables.

Jesus never rejected or ignored anyone, regardless of severe or frightening disabilities. His abundant compassion and love were poured out unreservedly without fear of contamination and without resentment or conditions or judgment. Our acceptance of persons with disabilities should be as pure.

## **Pity**

### ***"I feel so sorry for these people. They need us to help them."***

The Old Testament is filled with references to God's compassion for His people, and His response to us and provision for us because of His compassion. The New Testament records time after time when Jesus was filled with compassion, and we see that His response was one of action. Jesus did something in response to the need He saw before Him.

The word "pity" is often used interchangeably with "compassion" but in fact, "pity" refers more to a feeling of sorrow rather than a feeling that leads to action. In the past, the word pity suggested a sense of superiority. "I feel pity for you because I married better, or I have more money, or I have a better education, or I have held this position longer than you" — any such comparison. Such a feeling of superiority leads us far away from the compassionate interaction that Jesus modeled and calls for.

People with disabilities usually work very hard to compensate for their limitations. Their families often feel very protective toward them and do not want others coming into their lives that will make them feel inferior in any way. Christians who want to help must examine their own motives and their own attitudes. Is your goal to minis-

ter alongside the person with a disability, to become his or her friend, and to form a give and take relationship? If not, you may need to pray about your attitude before offering to help. We need to make sure that our feeling is one of compassion that will lead us to action and not pity that may lead us to a feeling of superiority.

### **Helplessness**

***"We do not have any special training."***

Most people are aware of the many medical and educational professionals who are involved in the life of a person with a disability. They then assume that some training is necessary in order to work with that person. However, to minister to a person with a disability and his family, the volunteer needs a servant's heart, flexibility, understanding, compassion, and a sincere motive. Anything you need to know about the person's adaptive equipment or medical needs will come as you work with him and get to know him.

### **Insensitivity**

***"We can ask the family of the person with the disability to lead this ministry."***

The last thing families experiencing disability need is another responsibility. The day-to-day stress is already taking its toll in ways you are not able to see. After reading the disability-related statistics (on pages 1 and 2), you will think twice before asking families to take on an additional job.

Ask for input and advice, but avoid giving families any of the class responsibilities. Allow them to bask in the warmth of a loving, caring church family. This is a much-needed and much-appreciated aspect of disability ministry.

### **Fear**

***"I know I am going to say something stupid or offensive. I do not know how to act."***

Be a friend. Be genuine. Be transparent.

Ask questions. Often, persons with disabilities and their families are eager to talk and will be pleased that someone demonstrates care and concern by asking. If a question concerns something they would rather not discuss, they will let say so.

Treat persons with disabilities as you want to be treated.

With the emphasis on inclusion in our public school systems, most parents and children are quite comfortable with the concept of inclusion — and expect it. Give parents who are concerned the appropriate information. Give them the opportunity to ask questions. In an informal setting, arrange for them to meet the students who will be in their child's class and to meet his or her family.

## Ministerial Staff Education

Remember, it is quite likely that there was no coursework in Bible college or seminary to prepare your ministerial staff for this type of ministry. Unless they have had experience on a personal level with a disabled family member, they will probably be unaware of the unique challenges families face.

Put yourself in the role of an educator. Help your ministerial staff learn what they need to know in order to respond compassionately to persons with disabilities and their families.

Here are some simple suggestions.

- Share disability-related facts in *Lesson One*.
- Schedule a time to show the leadership of your church the video segments of "Exceptional Teaching OnLine."
- Arrange for the leadership to meet a family experiencing a disability in an informal setting. It is important for leaders to learn firsthand about the struggles and joys of living with an individual with disabilities. This will help your leadership staff learn on a tangible level what the benefits of such a ministry could be.
- Share brief excerpts from books or articles that are related to disability ministry. **No Disabled Souls** (available in the CCFH online store) and the CCFH blog are excellent resources.

Be organized and well prepared when you meet with your ministerial staff. Present clear, concise written information so that it can be reviewed more thoroughly after the meeting. Let them know you are prepared to spearhead the initiative under their leadership.

Encourage them to speak with leaders of congregations where this type of ministry is taking place.

Encourage your pastoral staff in the role as advocate/equiper. Assist in defining the pastoral role in the disability ministry as someone who:

- listens with compassion and concern,
- models *Christ-likeness* by setting a positive tone of acceptance,
- gives solid answers to "why" questions,
- prays with and for families,
- encourages elder support,
- encourages members of the body at large to get involved, and
- becomes aware of community resources.

## **Twelve Steps for Implementing Your Inclusive Ministry**

**STEP ONE:** Determine your approach. Survey the congregation to locate persons and families who are dealing with disability and people who are willing to serve. (Sample surveys are found at the end of this lesson.) Study the results and write a mission statement.

*We recommend that the survey be included in the Sunday morning bulletin for two consecutive Sundays with encouragement from the pulpit to return it.*

- When all congregational surveys have been collected, tabulate the findings.
- Tabulate your research of community needs.
- Compare the needs of your congregation with the needs of your community. This should help you identify and plan for meeting the greater need.

**STEP TWO:** Involve the entire congregation and the leadership and establish a plan for making the chosen strategy a reality.

*Acknowledge all needs and concerns. Discuss them prayerfully and carefully. Look not just at spiritual needs but at the needs of the whole person or family (i.e. church relationships, day-to-day living needs, support systems, socialization, etc.).*

- Prioritize needs.
- List all possible strategies for meeting the needs to be addressed; then choose the most appropriate, practical, and doable.

**STEP THREE:** Inform the congregation and community of your plan. Advertise your efforts in church literature and in the local newspaper. Host a disability awareness Sunday or weekend.

*Never underestimate the power of the pulpit. A one or two minute announcement made by the minister from the pulpit is more effective than a thousand words written in the church newsletter or spoken by a lay leader.*

**STEP FOUR:** Train the staff and recruit volunteer helpers. Provide teachers with assurance of prayer, materials, information on disabilities, and plenty of assistance for making the chosen strategy a reality.

*The material provided in this book gives you an excellent start. Use "Exceptional Teaching OnLine" to supplement the educational experience.*

- Assign responsibilities.
- Set timeline for steps towards completion of strategy.
- Regularly evaluate, modify, and update strategy.

**STEP FIVE:** Survey your classrooms. The classroom should be attractive as well as safe and accessible for students of all abilities.

*Review church facilities. Be familiar with all areas and their levels of accessibility. This is important before you begin strategizing. You do not want to invest time and money into an activity that persons with disabilities cannot benefit from because of lack of accessibility.*

**STEP SIX:** Adapt curriculum and select good methods for teaching. Be creative, bearing in mind the student's needs and abilities. Whatever the material or the method, it is important to stress to your students that the lessons you are teaching are from God's Word.

*A curriculum does not have to be expensive. Building on straightforward Bible verses such as John 3:16 will get results.*

**STEP SEVEN:** Prepare the students for the inclusion experience. The overall goal is to make everyone feel comfortable. Be open and honest about the situation.

*Remember the learning experience will enrich all involved with proper preparation.*

**STEP EIGHT:** Learn about the student to be included. Learn as much as you can about the student's spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.

*Read material about the student's diagnosis but keep in mind that you are not an expert and need the input of the student and those involved in his life to develop a plan of accommodation.*

**STEP NINE:** Interview the family. Get all the information you need to make the student's placement in the classroom a positive experience.

*All information is confidential and should not be shared outside the teaching staff without permission.*

**STEP TEN:** Help the parents participate in the IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee) process, as well as the IEP (Individual Education Plan) process with their local school board.

*Let caregivers know this is necessary to insure a learning experience that will enrich students as they learn of the eternal plan and find their place in the life of the church.*

**STEP ELEVEN:** Anticipate the person's future in the congregation. Continue spiritual nurturing through adolescence and adulthood.

*No matter what age or ability, there is a place of service for all. Teaching classes, singing in the choir, greeting those entering for worship, cooking meals, encouraging, praying for others, etc, are all ways to serve.*

**STEP TWELVE:** Enjoy knowing that you are making an eternal difference. Whatever the situation, help the person to know that he or she is surrounded by God's love and mercy.

Sample Survey of Disability Needs  
(For congregation and for community)

1. Do you have a disability or do you frequently interact with any person who has a disability?       Yes       No

2. Who is that person?

- friend                       relative                       neighbor  
 co-worker                       my child's friend                       my friend's child

3. What is the age of the individual who has a disability?

- under 18                       18-25                       26-30  
 30s                       40s                       50s                       60 & over

4. Does that person regularly attend church?    Yes       No

5. What is the nature of the disability?

- deaf or hard of hearing       Down syndrome                       stroke  
 physical disability                       traumatic head injury                       autism  
 mental illness                       visual impairment                       cerebral palsy  
 cognitive disability                       learning disability                       ADHD  
 behaviour disorder                       other \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please explain)*

6. Do you, your friend, or relative need:

- assistance with weekly shopping
- transportation for appointments
- sign language interpretation
- Braille Bible study materials
- amplification equipment
- medical equipment (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- other needs (explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- counseling
- respite care
- support group
- large print Bible

7. If you were to receive respite care, how often would you want help?

- weekly
  - monthly
  - overnight
  - weekend
- \_\_\_\_\_

8. What can we do to help you, your friend, or relative participate in the fellowship of our church?

- provide transportation
- provide a specialized Sunday school class
- provide better accessibility
- other (explain)\_\_\_\_\_

8. What else can we do to provide support and encouragement for you, your friend, or relative?

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City/Prov/PC\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email\_\_\_\_\_

Sample Survey of Congregational Participation

## How Will You Reach Out?

- I am interested in learning more about this ministry.
- I will attend an informational meeting on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(meeting date)
- I am unable to attend the meeting, but would like to be a member of the team.
- I would like the Disability Ministry team to contact me.
- I would like to be trained as a volunteer in the following areas:  
(Please check all that apply.)
  - Education
  - Respite care activities
  - Sunday School teacher
  - Mother's Day Out
  - Sunday School assistant
  - Friday Night Live
  - Bi-weekly Bible studies leader
  - Saturday morning
  - Transportation
  - Prayer Partners
  - Driver (Sunday mornings or mid-week activities)
  - Pray for ministry
  - Pray with people who have disabilities
  - Carpool
  - Invite the family to my home
  - Adopt-A-Friend
  - Buddy with a person who has disabilities in Sunday school and worship
  - Take person out, invite to my home, send cards and notes

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/Prov/PC \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 3

### In this lesson we will:

- D. Identify suitable volunteers.
- E. Provide volunteers with awareness and accommodation information.
- F. Retain volunteers with encouragement.

### Identifying Volunteers Who Are a Good Fit

When you surveyed the needs of the congregation, you also asked for a response from those who might be interested in serving. You may have to elicit additional volunteers. Look at your entire membership. Consider seniors, singles, youth group members, college students, and mature young people who could serve as peer tutors or buddies.

The core of your volunteer team will be teachers and buddies. A *buddy* is an assistant who serves as a student companion in the classroom or during an activity. As you equip them for service in disability ministry, the primary goal is to give basic information to establish a satisfactory comfort level.

### Criteria for an inclusive teacher:

Peggy Willocks, a longtime veteran in the classroom and a person with a disability herself, presents the following questions that each teacher should answer with a resounding "Yes!" if she plans to teach those with disabilities:

- First and foremost, have I prayed about this student's situation and my influence on his or her spiritual life?
- Am I properly informed as to this student's condition, and am I sure that the measures taken are appropriate?
- Do I truly believe in and encourage the success of this student in my classroom?
- Am I encouraging the acceptance of this student by the other students through my example?
- Do I answer questions by the other students in a tactful, loving way?
- Am I treating this student fairly, avoiding singling out the student, and am I fostering his or her independence?
- Is the environment or room arrangement such that the student is able to move freely and safely about the room?
- Is the placement of the student in relationship to the teacher adequate for the student to see and/or hear well and where I can monitor possible situations quickly?
- Have prior arrangements or modifications been made so that the student can interact with both students and teacher in an independent manner?

## Traits of an Effective Teacher

<b>Attributes: An effective teacher...</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is consistent.</li> <li>• is fair.</li> <li>• is firm.</li> <li>• chooses battles wisely.</li> <li>• believes in the student.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is self-controlled.</li> <li>• can give and receive affection.</li> <li>• is a good listener.</li> <li>• wants the student to have faith.</li> <li>• establishes classroom rules and sticks to them.</li> </ul>
<b>Qualifications: An effective teacher...</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cares about students of all abilities.</li> <li>• believes that what is being taught is important and will make an eternal difference.</li> <li>• does not need high-achieving students in order to feel successful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not mind doing a little extra for a student who needs it.</li> <li>• is willing to learn about a student's disability.</li> <li>• enjoys training people to assist in the teaching process.</li> <li>• is able to make quick decisions under pressure.</li> </ul>
<b>A good teacher's primary goal is to teach the student:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who God is.</li> <li>• Who His Son, Jesus, is.</li> <li>• Who is the Holy Spirit.</li> <li>• About the Old Testament heroes.</li> <li>• About the Old Testament events.</li> <li>• The New Testament characters.</li> <li>• The New Testament events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To appreciate Christian music.</li> <li>• To sing Christian choruses and hymns.</li> <li>• How to pray.</li> <li>• To have relationships with his peers.</li> <li>• To know his strengths.</li> <li>• To know his self-worth.</li> <li>• To be responsible for his own behaviour.</li> <li>• To accept Jesus as his Lord and Saviour.</li> </ul>

Whatever the student's diagnosis, the goals for their Christian education and spiritual development are the same. Only their mental age and functional ability are qualifying factors. The main purpose of teaching is not to please the family. The goal is not to baby sit. The aim is to teach the Gospel of Jesus at whatever level the student can manage. To that end, teaching students with the preceding goals in mind will make your philosophy and your procedure match.

## Promote awareness

- Simulation activities will help your volunteers understand a little of what it is like to have a disability. The experience of just a few minutes participating in a group activity in a wheelchair, with a blindfold, with earplugs, or with their arms tied to their sides can have a big impact and help develop patience and humility.
- Encourage the appropriate use of language. Remind volunteers to refer to the person first, then the disability. For example, "the girl has Down syndrome" NOT "the Down syndrome girl". Avoid terminology like *afflicted*, *victim*, and *wheelchair bound*. Remind volunteers that good communication skills include visual directness, touching, and not pretending to understand when you really do not. Acquaint volunteers with communication devices or other technology the persons with whom they minister with might use.
- Emphasize confidentiality. Nothing that is said to a volunteer in confidence should be repeated under any circumstance unless the volunteer fears for the physical, emotional, or sexual well-being of the confidant. The chain of command in your ministry should be clearly defined so the volunteers know exactly to whom they should go if such abuse is suspected.
- Familiarize volunteers with wheelchair etiquette as well as guide/service dog etiquette. For instance, a volunteer should never walk behind a person in a wheelchair and begin pushing — he must first ask if the person wants to be pushed and then how to proceed. In the case of guide and service dogs, volunteers must not pet them or distract them while they are "on duty" (in harness or with their backpacks on).
- Be sure volunteers know what to do if someone has a seizure or chokes.
- Give volunteers basic definitions for the disabilities they will be dealing with. Detailed medical jargon and technical information is confusing and unnecessary. Keep it brief and simple. Encourage volunteers to ask the person they are ministering with, or a family member, to explain the disability.
- Encourage volunteers to *simply be a friend*.

## **Provide volunteers with diagnosis specific accommodation information**

### **Students with learning disabilities**

- Provide for needed breaks in concentration.
- Do not "lecture" for long periods of time.
- Continually refocus the student's attention.
- Cut down on distracting noise and limit the visual environment.
- Use active learning strategies.
- Engage all five senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch) in each lesson.

### **Students with emotional problems**

- Be loving, but firm.
- Plan for success.
- Do not make a commitment you can not keep.
- Ask for advice from parents and professionals that work with this student.

### **Students with a cognitive disability**

- Routine is important.
- Avoid abstract concepts and ideas.
- Allow more time for learning.
- Use repetition to aid retention.
- Be patient and unhurried in teaching.
- Give only one or two directions at a time.
- Make lesson meaningful and applicable to their lives.

### **Students with visual impairments**

- Use clear, uncluttered visual aids.
- Address the student by name.
- Give explanations each time movement in the room is necessary.
- Familiarize yourself with sighted guide techniques.
- Explain guide dog etiquette to the class (never pet a dog while he is working).
- Provide Braille or large print materials.

### **Students with autism**

- Avoid giving the student the choice to participate in a particular activity.
- Do not touch the student.
- Provide one-on-one assistance for each student with autism.
- If the child's behaviour becomes disruptive remove the child from the room and help him calm down by taking a walk or getting a drink of water. After the child is calm, return to class.
- Routine is extremely important.
- Be calm and patient in dealing with the student.

### **Students with hearing impairments**

- Do not shout.
- If the student lip reads, make sure he has a good view of your mouth.
- If the student wears hearing aids, keep extra batteries on hand.
- Provide a sign language interpreter if necessary.

## **Students with physical disabilities**

- Familiarize yourself with any equipment the student uses.
- Explain to other students in the class how to treat equipment with respect.
- Make sure all facilities are accessible.
- Train a peer assistant to help the student with tasks that are beyond his physical capabilities.

## **Students with speech problems**

- Practice good listening skills.
- Never pretend you understand something if you do not; ask the student to repeat comments or questions.
- If you still have problems understanding, ask the student to draw a picture or point.

## **Retaining Your Staff**

Once your volunteers are recruited and trained and the plan is underway, do not abandon them. Offer opportunities for continued education and remember to thank them — often and with genuine appreciation! Pray for your volunteers — and all ministry staff — on a regular basis, and tell them you are praying

## **Encouragement**

- ✓ Meet as a group often to evaluate, plan, and prepare.
- ✓ Provide continuous opportunities for training and education by sharing articles and newsletters. Provide means for volunteers to attend seminars and workshops.
- ✓ Explore networking possibilities where individuals and groups engaged in disability ministry meet together to share ideas and resources.
- ✓ If a volunteer incurs expenses, reimburse him or her in a timely manner.
- ✓ Regularly send thank you notes and postcards to thank every volunteer.
- ✓ Provide a job description that clearly details expectations and responsibilities.
- ✓ Provide specific training in behaviour management techniques, practical teaching principals and the effective use of curriculum and materials
- ✓ Remind volunteers how much their relationship will mean to the individual's family. Tell them if they make a promise to keep it.
- ✓ Initially, ask volunteers to commit to three months of service. At the end of three months, sit down together and evaluate the experience and determine if the volunteer is ready and willing to commit a year of service to the disabilities ministry. Re-evaluate at the end of that year.
- ✓ Pray for and with the volunteers. Encourage them to pray for their personal commitment and for the individuals they will be ministering with.

### **To keep your ministry healthy and growing:**

- Pray
- Stay focused on the goals
- Constantly evaluate
- Train and nurture volunteers regularly
- Avoid burnout
- Network
- Emphasize creativity
- Rest

## LESSON 4

### In this lesson we will:

- A. Study an overview of disability.
- B. Get to know the student.
- C. Make everyone a part of the inclusion process.

### AN OVERVIEW OF DISABILITY.

Knowing the range of students with disabilities will result in ministry expansion and ensuring that we have not overlooked a student who needs to hear about Jesus.

### There are 16 basic categories of students with disabilities.

- 1. Learning Disabilities** - The IDEA says that a learning disability is:  
a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of cognitive disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
- 2. Cognitive Disability** - refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work. A cognitive disability manifests before age 18. Down syndrome is likely the most widely known cognitive diagnosis. A newer one is fetal alcohol syndrome.
- 3. Gifted** - The term "gifted and talented" when used in respect to students, children or youth means students, children or youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership ability, or in specific academic fields, and who require service or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities.
- 4. Speech Problems - articulation, voice disorders, and dysfluency.**
  - **Articulation disorder** - In simple terms, one cannot speak plainly; they sometimes **substitute** the wrong sound for the correct one (**wabbit** instead of **rabbit**); **omit** a sound (**boo** for **blue**); **add** a sound (**hammer** becomes **hamber**); **distort** sounds (**sleep** is **thleep** or **zleep**).
  - **Voice disorders** are the least common of the speech problems among children. When the components of voice — pitch, duration, intensity, resonance, and quality — sound inappropriate for sex and age, a voice disorder

may be diagnosed. Voice disorders are often associated with juvenile arthritis, Tourette syndrome, and emotional disorders.

- The most common form of **dysfluency** is stuttering, which is a break in the rhythm of speech.

**5. Language Problems** - Speech is the way we produce sound. Language is the code we use to interrupt the speech.

**6. Behaviour Disorders** - When a person's emotional and behaviour responses in a variety of settings differ significantly from his age mates and his cultural and ethnic group, he is said to have a behaviour disorder.

**7. Autism**- A definition is: "a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, usually evident before age three, which adversely affects a child's educational performance."

**8. Health Disorders** - The definition of children with health disorders lists the common chronic and acute health problems: asthma, diabetes, heart, sickle cell anemia, and others.

**9. Physical Disabilities** - The impairment must interfere with the child's education. **Three kinds of impairments** are recognized: **impairments resulting from congenital anomalies** (a missing limb), from **disease** (polio), and from **other causes** (cerebral palsy).

**10. Deaf and Hearing Impaired** - There are two categories:

- The child who is deaf does not use hearing to understand speech, even with amplification. While the deaf child may pick up sounds through residual hearing, he relies on his sight for learning and communicating.
- The child with a hearing impairment, which may range from mild to severe, still depends on the auditory channel for learning and communicating; however, the hearing loss adversely affects his education.

**11. Blind and Visually Impaired** - Visual impairment for individuals can be classified by how much they use their vision and or/how much they use the sense of touch for learning.

- **Totally blind** - has no real input from vision. Instead he uses touch and hearing to learn about his world.
- **Functionally blind** - uses Braille for reading and writing. He also depends on his limited vision to walk through a classroom or to sort objects by colour.
- **Low vision** - refers to children who can read print, even though they use magnifiers or large print. Some can read print and Braille. They might be legally blind and be able to employ vision in learning.

**12. Deaf-Blind** - A combination of hearing and vision problems that cause "such severe communication and other developmental and learning needs that the persons cannot be appropriately educated in special education programs solely for children and youth with hearing impairments, visual impairments,

or severe disabilities, without supplementary assistance to address their educational needs due to these dual, concurrent disabilities.”

**13. Severe and Multiple** - The term “children with severe disabilities” refers to children with disabilities who, because of the intensity of their physical, mental, or emotional problems, need highly specialized education, social, psychological, and medical services in order to maximize their full potential for useful and meaningful participation in society and for self-fulfillment. The term includes those children with disabilities with severe emotional disturbance (including schizophrenia), autism, severe and profound cognitive disability, and those who have two or more serious disabilities such as deaf-blindness, cognitive disability and blindness, and cerebral palsy and deafness.

**14. Functionally Delayed –**

A child who has or develops a continuing disability in intellectual functioning and achievement which significantly impairs the ability to think and/or act in a regular school program, but who is functioning socially at or near a level appropriate to his/her chronological age.

**15. Developmentally Delayed** - refers to children aged 3 through 9 who are experiencing delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, or adaptive development that adversely affect a child’s education performance.

**16. Traumatic Brain Injury –**

...an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Let’s take a more in-depth look at four of the most likely groups to appear in a Christian education setting: **cognitive disability, autism, emotional/behaviour disorders, and learning disabilities.**

## DEFINITIONS

**Cognitive Disability (CD):** The term means three factors have been considered.

- First, the student's Intellectual Quotient is less than seventy.
- Second, he will not adapt to his surroundings well. His speech and language skills, self-care routines, social interactions, self-direction, use of his community, and ability to work will not match those of his age-mates without CD.
- Third, the cause of his cognitive disability happened before his 18th birthday. The last factor is probably the most important to his being in your classroom. Whatever happened happened early. That is the significance of CD's being a developmental disorder. Some common CD diagnoses are Down syndrome, Fragile-X syndrome, and Fetal Alcohol syndrome.

**Autism:** "A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, usually evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance."

**In addition to the label of autism, a student may carry one of the following labels:**

- **Pervasive developmental disorder - not otherwise specified** (POD-NOS) is used if a child has some symptoms of autism, but not enough to carry the classical diagnosis.
- **Asperger's syndrome** describes children with autistic behaviours, but who have good language skills.
- **Childhood disintegrative disorder** (CDD) is used with children who appear to be developing normally for a few years, but then lose skills, and show autistic-like behaviours.
- **Rett syndrome** means the child has inadequate brain growth, has seizures and autistic behaviours. It happens mainly to girls.

**Emotional disturbance:**

1. "The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long time, and to marked degree that adversely affects educational performance:
  - (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or other health factors,
  - (b) Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers,
  - (c) Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances,
  - (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression,
  - (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems."
2. The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to those who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.
3. Common diagnoses are anxiety-withdrawal disorder, bipolar disorder, major depression, oppositional-defiant disorder, and conduct disorder.

**Learning disability** - If the child has a learning disability, it:

- Affects the student's ability to interpret what he sees or hears.
- Interferes with the ability to integrate information from the various parts of his brain.
- Results in difficulties in speech and language, attention, self-control, and coordination.

**A definition for a learning disability is:**

...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of cognitive disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

**GET TO KNOW THE STUDENT.**

Getting to know the student is crucial to successful teaching. Do not attempt to teach the child without first getting to know her and her environment. Spending time with the child, her family, and her environment will save a lot of frustration later. *Use the Parent/Guardian Interview Form at the end of this lesson to gather information.*

Obviously it will be easier if you know in advance that the child will be attending your class. If you learn through the church office that a child with a disability will be coming with her family, follow the OAT plan (Observe, Ask, and Test) for getting to know her. On the other hand, if the child arrives at church without notice, explain to the parents that you welcome the child but need some time to get to know her. Assign an assistant to the child who will stay with her during all facets of the Christian education experience. Then, follow the OAT plan.

Observe	Ask	Test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In his home, at school, on the playground, watch the child.</li> <li>• Ask teachers, aides, and other people who work with him about him.</li> <li>• Record the information.</li> <li>• Learn his hobbies, his favorite pastime, friend, and food.</li> <li>• What he does best and poorest. What are his strengths and weaknesses?</li> <li>• What can he do alone?</li> <li>• What has to be done for him? How does he spend most of his day?</li> <li>• How does his disability limit his functioning?</li> <li>• <i>Note: All visits must be with parental consent. Because of confidentiality it might be difficult to observe in the school classroom.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview the parents and record their responses.</li> <li>• What is his diagnosis?</li> <li>• What is his school placement? Does he take medication?</li> <li>• What does the family do to control inappropriate behaviour?</li> <li>• Is he allergic to anything?</li> <li>• What is his favorite snack?</li> <li>• How does he take care of elimination needs?</li> <li>• Does he feed himself?</li> <li>• Is his speech understandable to people who don't know him?</li> <li>• How does he ask for a drink, to use the toilet?</li> <li>• Does he use a hearing aid, wheelchair, etc?</li> <li>• What religious concepts does he understand?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a method of learning how much a student knows about the Bible, record the results, and use it for teaching him.</li> <li>• Search for the basics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who is God?</li> <li>▪ Who is Jesus?</li> <li>▪ Who is the Holy Spirit?</li> <li>▪ What is good?</li> <li>▪ What is bad?</li> <li>▪ Where is heaven?</li> <li>▪ What does he know about church?</li> <li>▪ About church songs?</li> <li>▪ About church events?</li> <li>▪ Prayer?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A test of religious knowledge that can be adapted to your needs will be useful.</li> </ul>

***If there are behaviour problems, discuss them with the family.***

If the student to be included has a serious behaviour problem, carefully prepare for the experience. Parents of children without disabilities will be concerned about their safety. The children without disabilities may be uneasy or afraid. Some preliminary planning will help make the situation easier.

✓ Meet with the parents to discuss the behavior.
✓ Is he on medication for his behaviour?
✓ Does he have a behaviour modification plan?
✓ Is the behavior improving?
✓ Ask about the nature of the behaviour. Does he hit? Bite? Throw objects? Run?
✓ Does he receive other professional help?
✓ Develop a written plan for handling the difficult behaviour.
✓ Record the information on a form.

## **USE A FOUR-PART PREPARATION APPROACH TO MAKE EVERYONE A PART OF THE INCLUSION PROCESS.**

### **1. Deal directly with the students without disabilities reaction to disability with *positive responses*.**

- Children see disability as disease. *Assure them they can not catch it.*
- Children use vision as a primary learning channel. *Teach them the difference between a friendly look and a stare.*
- Children mimic to explore how it would feel to walk or talk like a friend with a disability. *Tell them to do so in private.*

### **2. Enhance positive attitudes with positive experiences.**

- Help children use appropriate language. Stress the person's name and not his diagnosis. Explain "people-first" language. For example, "Jessica has cerebral palsy."
- Do not suggest, "We are all disabled in some way." Such statements are meant to help the persons with disabilities feel equal, but that is not what the typical child perceives. He can run; his friend with a brace cannot.
- Avoid stressing that persons with disabilities are special. All of us are special to God.
- Expose children to warm, open adults with disabilities. I know a lady who uses her wheelchair as a classroom. When she notices a child having trouble with her presence, she starts a conversation, offers a free ride, and lets the child touch her leg brace. Touching teaches youngsters that a person with a disability is a person. Ask adults with disabilities if they will come in the classroom and allow the children to touch them and ask questions.
- Remind parents that their children will adopt their attitudes even though words are never spoken. Children will copy what they see and hear or think they see and hear.
- Encourage children to do acts of kindness for people with disabilities. A note, a card, a small gift, or a visit are all good ways of expressing concern. Such actions can lead to more involvement in the lives of persons with disabilities.
- Encourage children without disabilities to be peer tutors and buddies in activities that include children with disabilities. This approach builds good attitudes, trains future leaders, and presents people as people.

### **3. Talk about behaviour problems with the class.**

- Openly discuss the student with the entire class and staff in a genteel manner.
- Explain that his problem causes the behaviour and he cannot help it.
- Clarify that their friend's misbehaviour does not give them the right to do the same.

### **4. Anchor the lessons in Jesus' teachings.**

Children will be delighted when encouraged to take off the roof for their friends with disabilities. When four of his friends took a man with a physical disability to Jesus (Mark 2:1-12), the crowd surrounding Him was so big they could not get into the house. So, they carried him to the roof, made a hole, and lowered the man to the healing presence of Jesus. Jesus said that the faith of the man's

friends caused the healing. Children will also be impressed by the fact that Jesus touched people with disabilities.

***Nothing is more satisfying than knowing that the seeds you planted have produced fruit.***

Follow through with promoting the inclusion process. Someday the lessons learned from your teaching will generate a story like the one that follows

Talking to children in Vacation Bible Schools has provided me with many good opportunities to teach children about disability. On the first day of a VBS session, I talked to 50 five-year-olds about what it means to have a disability, making the point that the most important part of us is inside, not outside. When the session was over, an enthusiastic young man who had another member of the group in tow encountered me.

He announced, "Nathan is *handicapped*."

I asked Nathan what his disability was.

"Spina bifida," was the quick, almost proud, reply.

Deciding that I wanted to use Nathan in the next day's lesson, I called his mother for permission. She gladly approved, reporting, "When I asked Nathan what he learned in Vacation Bible School today, he answered, 'It is OK to have spina bifida.'"

# Parent/Guardian Interview Form

Student's Name:	Birth date:
Address:	
Telephone:	E-mail
Parents' Names:	
Siblings' Names	

## Education

Specific Diagnosis:
Is student in school? If yes, where?
Type of placement:
Teacher's name:
Teacher's phone and e-mail:

## Behavior

Is the student on medication? If so, what is it and how often does it have to be administered?
Describe the student's behaviour, (Is he aggressive? Does he hit, bite, throw, run away, yell, pull hair, self abusive?)
What do you do to control his behaviour?
How does he deal with people he does not know?

## **Food**

Please describe any nonstandard eating habits the student has:

Is he allergic to any foods? If so, please describe the food and reaction.

Please list any food restrictions:

What type of snack food does he prefer?

## **Independence and Prosthetic Devices**

Does the child take care of his or her toileting needs?

Does the child feed him or herself?

Does the child dress him or herself?

Does the child use a hearing aid? Cane? Wheelchair? Walker? Have artificial limbs? Any other prosthetic device? Or medical equipment?

## Communication

Is the student's speech understandable to people who do not know him or her?

How does the student communicate basic needs? (Such as asking for a drink or using the toilet.)

Does he or she use any sign language or a language board?

What special care needs should we be aware of?

## Religious

What is the student's previous experience attending church?

What is the family's religious background and practice?

What concepts does the student understand: God? Jesus? Church? Heaven?

Other: (Add any questions that will help you get a good overview of how the student functions. Remember to get the information you need to make the placement in the classroom a positive one for him and his family).

## Lesson 5

### In this lesson we will:

- A. Review the necessity for discipline and how to put it in to practice.
- B. Look at procedures for behaviour management.
- C. Apply the basics to the learning setting.

### BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Study solid behaviour management and discipline techniques. Remember, you can not be solely responsible for all the discipline. In order to deal with behavioural and emotional problems, the student must exert self-control and the leader must exert authority control.

Let's take a look at a familiar Scripture and see if it takes on some new meaning here. *"All Scripture is given ... for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).*

### Examine Your Purpose

When discipline is necessary, first examine your purpose. Is your purpose to cut down the offending student and put him in his place, or is it to honestly correct his behaviour and point him toward proper future actions? Review these six principles for establishing good discipline.

1. Discipline must be a team effort between the teacher and student in order to be effective.
2. Good discipline requires the do's as well as the do not's.
3. Examine your purpose for the discipline before carrying it out.
4. Whenever possible, deal with the behaviour problem individually and not in the group. The child with an emotional problem will be more likely to honestly face the situation if he is not put on the spot in front on his peers.
5. Avoid anger and remain calm. Anger only tells your student that you have been inconvenienced, and this diverts the attention from his wrong behaviour. The student will think he is being corrected for making you mad.
6. Look for ways to reinforce the student's good behaviour.

**Besides this list of principles that promote good discipline, the following guidelines will help you put them into practice.**

1. Eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive.
2. Make your rules realistic.
3. Make sure your rules are clear.
4. Your discipline enforcement must be consistent.
5. Recognizing the cause of the problem is usually the first step toward resolving it. Some common causes you should look for are facilities, boredom, special problems, and attention getting.

**Now that we have looked over principles and guidelines for discipline, let's look at the actual procedure.**

• Be on the alert by moving around to find discipline problems developing.
• Observe and be available.
• Stand beside or behind the problem student while listening to the group.
• Ask the student to speak with you outside of the group and share what seems to be bothering him.
• When talking with parents, be very careful not to condemn the student's behavior.
• Encourage positive self-discipline.

### **Behaviour Management Guidelines**

• Visit with the student's parent or guardian and learn their behaviour management techniques. Find out what kinds of situations upset the person, and how the caregiver handles these situations.
• Set a few clear rules. Allow the learners to assist in the formation of class rules.
• Post the rules in the classroom.
• Reinforce good behaviour.
• Do not expect behaviour beyond the student's maturity or comprehension.
• Be a good model of appropriate behaviour.
• If a learner requires discipline, do so away from the group.

**Before reacting, ask yourself, "What kind of misbehaviour is this?"**

#### **Is it developmental?**

Is the student misbehaving because you are expecting behaviour beyond his ability or development? Remember:

- Match teaching methods and behavioural expectations to the development level and learning style of the students.
- Instruct carefully for each new rule or activity. Tell the students exactly what can and can not be done.
- Set reasonable limits.

#### **Is it attention-getting?**

Is the behaviour aimed at getting attention from peers, volunteers, or observers? Remember:

- Do not ignore the behaviour. It usually will not go away and is likely to be repeated.
- Do not make the student displaying poor behaviour a "special helper" to stop the behaviour. This approach only reinforces and rewards inappropriate attention-getting behaviour.

### **Is it out of control?**

Is the student becoming hysterical, violent, or ready to run away? Remember:

- Avoid restraining the learner unless he is harming himself or someone else.
- A learner who is out of control is looking for someone else to be in control. While this fact may not seem true at the moment, it is usually the case.
- Approach the learner with a quiet, reassuring voice; with good eye contact; slowly, with hands and arms open. Do not lecture. Try to distract the learner.

### **Is it defiant and deliberate?**

Is the learner defying authority deliberately? Remember:

- Do not lose your cool.
- Do not use ridicule or sarcasm to correct behaviour.
- Be firm but never demeaning.

**Now that we have thought about some basics of behaviour control, let's apply them to the classroom.**

<b>Attributes of a good behaviour manager</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be full of praise.</li><li>• Use another adult or a class member to attend to behaviour outbursts.</li><li>• Make sure what you expect is clear.</li><li>• Be kind in correcting.</li><li>• Do not humiliate</li><li>• Do not lose your temper.</li><li>• Be fair.</li><li>• Be consistent.</li><li>• Admit if you are wrong.</li><li>• Apologize if necessary.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not be intimidated by the student or his family.</li><li>• Ignore a behaviour if it is bothering you more than the class.</li><li>• Do not pity or show sympathy for the student. It suggests superiority.</li><li>• Learn when it is time to have a respite from the student.</li><li>• Discover the child's special interests and refer to it in class.</li><li>• Develop a positive relationship.</li></ul>
<b>Keys to a good environment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seat the child with the behaviour disorder so you can see him.</li><li>• Keep him an "arm's length" away from the closest student.</li><li>• Keep the classroom as clutter-free as possible.</li><li>• Keep objects and materials out of sight or reach.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish classroom rules and consequences and post them.</li><li>• Create an emotionally safe classroom.</li><li>• Use a lot of drama, music, art and other ways a student can express himself.</li><li>• Have a place for the student to calm down.</li></ul>

<b>What can be done to help control behaviour before the student comes to the classroom?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to the parents about the child's behavior.</li> <li>• Ask if he/she is on medication.</li> <li>• Have enough help in the classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a detailed plan to control the behavior.</li> <li>• Talk to the children in the class about the problem.</li> </ul>
<b>What are some suggestions for specific misbehaviours?</b>	
<p><b><u>For Inattention</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seat student near the front.</li> <li>• Seat student near a good role model who can be a "peer study buddy."</li> <li>• Cut assignments into segments; give student one segment at a time.</li> <li>• Use cueing to regain child's attention (Example—holding up a bright colored paper, tapping on the desk, touching your shoulder. The cue should be subtle.)</li> <li>• Establish eye contact before giving instructions.</li> <li>• Give short direct instructions using both visual and oral cues when possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>For Impulsivity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignore minor inappropriate behaviours</li> <li>• Acknowledge positive behaviours when possible</li> <li>• Set up contract for behaviours that need monitoring</li> <li>• Give immediate reinforcements or consequences</li> <li>• Help child learn self-monitoring techniques</li> </ul> <p><b><u>For Hyperactivity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow child to stand at times</li> <li>• Ask him to run errands</li> </ul>
<b>To achieve academic success</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide extra time to complete work</li> <li>• Shorten assignments.</li> <li>• Use multi-sensory methods of teaching (visual, oral, and tactile).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind the child to check his own work to see if it is completed.</li> <li>• Give praise when due.</li> <li>• Show a loving attitude.</li> </ul>

### **Beneficial Teaching Tips for Inclusion**

The following suggestions are for teaching a child with a learning disability, but they apply to many children with other disabilities. Refer to the *Exceptional Teaching* Diagnosis Database for specific information for other diagnoses.

- Provide purposeful movement – teach gestures or sign language to accompany songs, poems and stories.
- Provide necessary breaks in concentration.
- Offer helpful classroom supplies such as two-handed scissors, jumbo crayons, and pencil grips.
- Have one-on-one help for all fine motor tasks such as cutting and pasting. Out-line items to be cut with a black marker.

- Copy materials on blue or green paper instead of white.
- Do not pass out any lesson material or tools until the time you need them. (ex. Hold pencils until after directions have been given.)
- Give only one or two directions at a time and read all written directions out loud.
- Keep classroom noise and distractions to a minimum. Do not leave doors and windows open; do not set up the classroom with the students facing doors and windows; avoid a lot of bright distracting decorations all over the room; etc.
- Create an atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance. Allow students to express their feelings without fear of ridicule.
- Make learning fun. Tell stories, sing songs, use skits....
- Vary kinds of activities. Use every sense at least one time each lesson.
- Be sure you have students' full attention before giving directions.
- Continually re-focus attention.
- Make lessons applicable to their lives. Role play and practice problem solving to emphasize the main idea.
- Avoid round robin reading or give assignments ahead of time so that students can practice.
- Teach in steps.
- Notice when students are behaving and praise them.
- Remember that routine is very important.
- Make it easy for your students to learn. Give precise directions and instructions. Have students repeat them to you.
- Make a class video. It will reveal creativity and give the student with a disability tangible proof that he is a welcomed, active member of his class.

## Lesson 6— Choose a lesson plan

### In this lesson we will:

Consider three action plans:

- A. General Published Material — Adapt
- B. Special Needs Curriculum — Adapt
- C. Custom — Create

*Decide whether to adapt or create your own lessons. Your choice will depend on the student, teaching preparation time, classroom (inclusive or special needs), and other factors.*

### **Three action plans to consider**

#### **A. Use customary published Sunday school materials. Adapt each lesson and activity so that the child with a disability can participate and benefit.**

Generally published Sunday school materials are written to cover a broad range of students, but they do not consider special needs. Therefore, some children with disabilities may not receive the full benefit of the message imparted in the lesson.

The degree of adaptation to standard lessons depends on the challenges associated with the student's disability.

Physical or Sensory	Few if any revisions to lessons may need to be made since the student's cognitive skills are likely to be on a par with others. Associated activities may need to be adjusted to accommodate individual needs.
Cognitive	Stress the lesson's application to the student's everyday life/experience.  *Keep the activities, pictures, stories, concepts and language simple and easy to understand (take mental age in to consideration.)

\*Know that if the children are chronologically older, they may become offended by pictures and activities meant for little children (even if they correlate with the student's mental age). If this happens, do activities and show pictures that are geared toward their same age peers, but use age appropriate language they will understand.

Keep a written record of how you have adapted a lesson and whether it was successful or not (keep in mind that some things may need to be changed as you deal with each individual's challenges and circumstances.)

**B. Purchase special needs curriculum and then adapt each lesson to fit your students' needs.**

Your church education ministry may have a standard source for curriculum material. If not, communicate with established disability ministries. Ask about their methods for creating and/or adapting Sunday school lessons.

There are several publishers and curriculum companies that produce special needs lesson plans. These companies produce high quality material. However, generalized special needs materials may not always relate to the specific needs of an individual student and must be adapted in many cases.

**Adapt or modify the materials for the child with a specific disability.**

**Some examples, for the student who...**

**Is blind.** Find a person in your community who is willing to Braille some of the lesson materials for your student.

**Is visually impaired.** Enlarge the lesson on the copy machine, provide a magnifying glass, or do whatever is necessary to make the print larger.

**Has a learning disability.** Color-code the parts of the lesson you want to stress. Use a highlighter or a transparency designed with colors to stress the main points of the lesson. If you want to ask a student with a learning disability to read, call him during the week and ask his family to practice with him.

**Is hard-of-hearing.** Put the important parts of the lesson on PowerPoint (or other means) and project it. This will help the student and his classmates as well. Putting the lesson on overheads will serve the same purpose. Projecting the instructions for the class will also help the student who is hard-of-hearing. The more visual the lesson is, the better it will be for the student who has auditory problems.

**Is deaf.** The lesson materials will be fine. He can read them. Like the student who is hard-of-hearing, the more visual you can make the lesson the better. To ensure the student is learning, provide an interpreter.

**Has a cognitive disability.** The materials will likely be a bit over his head. But provide him the same materials you do for the other members. Give him a workbook! He is part of the class and having his own workbook will help make him feel that way. The pictures will be age-appropriate. When there are table activities, simplify an activity or two and have a peer tutor help the student. Do not call on him to read unless you know that he can read and you have asked in advance. Ask him to do the motor-type activities.

**Has severe disability.** Think about preparing activities for him to take home. He can use these for his devotional thoughts and as a reminder of the lesson. If the lesson is about God's creativity, prepare a scrapbook of items God made. The sky is the limit. Use cotton for clouds. Glue some beans to a page. Pour some perfume on

the page. Instruct the family how to assist the child with the take-home activity you have prepared.

Watching the student work and seeing how he reacts to materials will provide you with more ideas on how to adapt the lesson materials to maximize his potential.

### **C. Create your own lessons and materials with each child specifically in mind.**

Find a good children's devotional or Bible storybook on par with the student's mental age. If you choose to compile your own lessons, consider using the New Century Version (NCV) of the Bible. It puts the scriptures in easy to understand language. Create lessons that will reach and teach your students.

The following is a lesson I created and used for a Bible school lesson on a Sunday near Thanksgiving. It was a simple one, but it got the point across.

**A sample lesson plan** suitable for adults or children at Thanksgiving.

#### **Purpose:**

Each member of the class will communicate three reasons she is grateful.

#### **Scripture Basis:**

Psalm 118:1 "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good."

#### **Materials:**

Magazines  
Fresh fruits and vegetables  
Brown paper bags

#### **Procedure:**

After talking about the season and what being grateful means, each student will find pictures in the magazines that suggest reasons for being thankful. Display a picture of a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Name some of the items. Have ready before class fruits or vegetables inside brown paper bags (one item to a bag). Allow the student to put a hand into the bag and touch the fruit or vegetable, but not see it. Can they identify it just by touch? Then show it to everyone and try to find it in the Thanksgiving meal picture or the magazines. They could be sliced and tasted if desired.

**Conclude** the class by thanking God for the objects in the pictures and for our food.

**Whether you are adapting or creating, let your inspirational movement flow.**

### **Pray for guidance**

#### **Consider your student**

- ❑ Age (chronological and mental)
- ❑ Challenge (behavioural, cognitive, physical or sensory)
- ❑ Reading and writing ability
- ❑ Level of religious understanding
- ❑ Spiritual need

**If creating, locate a Bible verse or passage of scripture to serve as the basis for your lesson.**

***Keep it simple.*** Ask yourself, *what is the best way for me to reinforce this message to my student?*

- ❑ Pictures
- ❑ Role playing
- ❑ Singing
- ❑ Crafts
- ❑ Game or physical activity

***Incorporate any or all of the above into your lesson plan.***

Remember, your lessons do not have to be filled with activities. Depending on the student, a straight-line method may be the most effective.

- ❑ Read the student a Bible story.
- ❑ Show him pictures that are applicable as you tell the story.
- ❑ Ask questions so that you will know if he understands what is going on in the story.
- ❑ If he does not seem to understand, try to relate what is happening in more current or individualized terms.
- ❑ Solicit student involvement. Ask what he might do in similar circumstances.
- ❑ Show how what is taught in the lesson can be used in his daily living.
- ❑ Ask what he learned from the lesson.

Do not be afraid to change your lesson plan as you go along. However, give your initial approach a chance to work before making any modifications.

**With whatever material that you use, follow two approaches: stress the sensory and stimulate as many learning channels as possible.**

**Approach one: Stress the sensory**

The child with developmental delay has missed opportunities to fill his or her brain. You can stimulate listening, talking, looking, touching, moving, smelling, and tasting through interest centers, music, stories, conversation, pictures and objects, cutting, pasting, finger-painting, games, drama, and much, much more. The basic concept is simple: ***every lesson should include as many activities to stimulate the senses as is practical.***

**Approach two: Stimulate as many learning channels as possible**

It is not always easy to know how any student is learning. Learning occurs by reading and writing, listening, talking, seeing, touching, moving, smelling, and tasting. The alert teacher will select those techniques that stimulate the most learning styles.

Know that the results of your teaching will be appreciated by the students, their families, your church body, and all who come in contact with the students throughout their lifetime.

A children's minister asked me to visit his church to observe a child with serious emotional problems. When I arrived in the children's department on Sunday morning, I didn't have to be told where to go. I followed the screaming.

As I entered the classroom for second graders, the teacher with her back to the door was holding a screaming, kicking child. The other children were sitting quietly at the table. The teacher said, "You are hurting me, but I am going to hold you until you calm down. Then, I will put you in your chair and I will tell you how much Jesus loves you." My job to tell her what to do had been done. She had told the other students to be calm and she would take care of the situation.

The teacher understood the boy's problems and valued him as a human being. She worked to get the care and education he needed. Today he is a wonderful family man, productive citizen, and faithful member of his church.

**Let your light** so shine before men, that they may see **your** good works, and glorify **your** Father which is in heaven. *Matthew 5:16 KJV*

**Proper preparation for teaching in a disability ministry will enhance your light as you spread the Good News to others.**