

## God in His tender mercy brings heart challenges to our ministries.

Disability has a way of stirring things up, in the heart and in the classroom.

Below are three major heart challenges when God brings a child with disabilities into your class.

### 1. Ministering to the Child with a Disability

- \* Ask God to put His hand on your ministry and help you to bless this child.
  
- \* Remember to ask God for wisdom.
  
- \* Model patience and prayer.
  
- \* Ask parents for advice on caring for their child.
  
- \* Don't try to guess or assume a diagnosis.
  
- \* Learn what you can about a child's disability.
  
- \* It may be helpful to recruit a helper to work with a child.
  
- \* Like all people, those with disabilities are sinners and in need a Savior.

### 2. Ministering to the Family of the Child

- \* Parents of disabled children are blessed when the body of Christ reaches out and loves and accepts them and their child.
  
- \* Take the time to ask parents about their life and how you can pray for them.
  
- \* Don't give advice to families about caring for their child.

- \* Families living with disability often struggle a great deal with intense day to day challenges. People who are hurting have a tendency to draw inward. True ministry draws the hurting outward and toward Christ.
- \* Disability can become all-consuming in a family.
- \* Helping people see life from an eternal perspective is a critical role of the church.
- \* Seek to get to know families and pray for them. Also meet some practical needs so that they are able to be a part of the body of Christ.
- \* It is important for parents of a child with disabilities to be able to go to church and be filled so that they can return home refreshed.

### **3. God's Work in the Hearts of the Team and the Typical Children in the Classroom**

- \* This child is with you for a God-ordained purpose.
- \* God wants you to find out what pleases Him and do it.
- \* God works in the hearts and attitudes of volunteers through disability.
- \* Some are not called to work directly with a child with disabilities.
- \* God works in the hearts of typical children as they see others model love for people with disabilities.

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***Our role in ministry is to help people grow a tender, unshakable love for Christ. God gives us tough situations that seem hard, but in fact, they are merciful.***

## Disability Resources

### Books about God, Suffering, and Disability

*A Lifetime of Wisdom—Embracing the Way God Heals You* by Joni Eareckson Tada

*Wrestling with an Angel—A Story of Love, Disability and the Lessons of Grace* by Greg Lucas

### Disability Ministry Resources

*Exceptional Teaching—A Comprehensive Guide for Including Students with Disabilities* by Jim Pierson

*Same Lake Different Boat—Coming Alongside People Touched by Disability* by Stephanie O. Hubach

*Joni and Friends Website* [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)

### Resources Specifically About Autism

*Autism and Your Church—Nurturing the Spiritual Growth of People with Autism Spectrum Disorders* by Barbara J. Newman

*Finding Your Child's Way on the Autism Spectrum—Discovering Unique Strengths, Mastering Behavior Challenges* by Dr. Laura Hendrickson

*Too Wise to Be Mistaken, Too Good to Be Unkind* by Cathy Steere

*The Unexpected Gift* by Michelle Schreder

*Temple Grandin* (DVD – PG) This movie is a true story of an autistic woman who is a top scientist in the livestock handling industry. It is especially helpful for understanding some of the sensory issues and struggles adapting to social situations associated with autism.

*Joni and Friends Television* ~ episodes 30 and 31 ~ “Making Sense of Autism” (Both episodes are available for viewing online: <http://www.joniandfriends.org/television/making-sense-autism-part-1/> <http://www.joniandfriends.org/television/making-sense-autism-part-2/> )