

Disability Sunday

4th October 2009

A day of focus on disability for churches and fellowships throughout the United Kingdom



Organised by

Through the Roof
P O Box 353
Epsom
KT18 5WS

Phone: 01372 749955

Web: www.disabilitysunday.org.uk
Email: info@disabilitysunday.org.uk

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Step by Step

Step 1 ***Form a team***

Find other people in your church who would be interested in helping your church participate in Disability Sunday. Ask disabled people in the church and others with experience of disability or a heart for disabled people. In addition to disabled people themselves, this may include parents of disabled children or medical or social service professionals.

Key points:

Share your vision with the team members.

Pray together for God's equipping for a Disability Sunday as well as future ministry.

Develop a proposal as to how your church would hold the Disability Sunday on 4 October 2009.

Step 2 ***Involve your Church's Leadership***

If you are not part of the leadership of your church, you and your team should meet with your church's vicar, priest or pastor. (If your church does not have an individual leader, approach your church's leadership team). Present your team's vision for participating in Disability Sunday.

Key points:

Present why this reflects God's heart.

Express your team's willingness to take the lead in organising this.

Explain that the leaders' support and involvement are vital.

Step 3 ***Publicity***

Disability Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to invite people who are disabled and their families from the community. Sample letters and posters are included in this document.

Publicity can be arranged through press releases to local newspapers and radio stations, letters to local residential, educational and day care facilities for disabled people, disability organisations, and local schools.

You should also publicise the event in your church starting early in July. Encourage the congregation to include family, friends or neighbours who are disabled.

Step 4 ***Develop your plan***

Your team should choose which parts of the Disability Sunday programme you want to use. You must do the worship service portion in order for it to be successful. The other parts are strongly recommended because they reinforce the worship service and get people talking about the subject of disability.

Children's programme - Talk with the people responsible for your church's children's activities and review the programme with them. Make sure they make it their responsibility to carry out the children's programme. You will have other things to do and they will do a better job of it. Make sure you follow up with them on a regular basis to ensure that the children's leaders have what they need and are on schedule. You will need to make sure that there are extra helpers available to assist any disabled children who join the children's activities.

The Worship Service - There is no one order of service that suits all churches, so it will be up to you and your church leaders to put together the service. It is, however, important that particular care is taken to ensure that the welcome at the beginning draws attention to the facilities available for disabled people, e.g. that there is a loop system, where to sit to benefit from the loop, the provision of large print song sheets etc. The following items may form part of your order of service:

Someone with a disability to lead the service through

A personal story (4-5 minutes) by a disabled person or family member

Music by a disabled person or group.

Scripture reading and prayer by someone with a disability or a family member.

A sermon focusing on God's view of people with disabilities. An outline sermon is included in this document.

A drama on the subject of disability

Involve disabled people at every level – taking up the offering, welcoming, giving out song sheets etc.

Be as creative as possible. However, a programme that is either not Christ-centred or that is completely different from a normal service will detract from future ministry.

☪ How about donating your offering for 4 October to Through the Roof or another disability ministry that you already work with? We rely on donations for our work of making the Christian message accessible to all and we'd be very grateful if you'd consider making Through the Roof the beneficiary of the day.

Step 5 Welcomers and Stewards

Preparations for the day must include some training for the stewards or welcome team. A guidance sheet for stewards/welcomers is included in this document and can be copied and given out to the team. The training should take place before the day, but you should be in touch with the stewarding or welcome team leader well in advance. It is a good idea to have more welcomers and stewards than usual so that some can show visitors, both disabled and non-disabled people to their seats and introduce the guests to the person who will be sitting next to them.

Step 6 **Your Church Building**

Your church doesn't have to have perfect access for people with limited mobility, but it should not be an impossible challenge either. A basic checklist is enclosed for your church. Desirable for the Disability Sunday are:

Parking for people with disabilities (blue badge holders), which is monitored to make sure that they can park in a suitable place to access the service.

A way to get into the front of the building without steps.

Seating area for wheelchair users that is not only at the back. In other words you should be able to give people who use a wheelchair a choice of whether or not they want to sit in the back, middle or front.

Child care (crèche, Sunday School) which can meet the needs of a disabled child.

Large print programmes /orders of service, notice sheets and songs used on the overhead projector (if your church uses such items during a service). It is simpler to make all printed material for that day in large print: 16 point type sizes will meet most needs.

An induction loop for hearing aid users.

A British Sign Language interpreter for Deaf people.

Wheelchair accessible toilet facilities.

If you are following the Children's Programme, you should try and make sure those rooms are wheelchair accessible as well.

Step 7 **Church feedback questionnaire**

To plan for future disability ministry, collect feedback from the congregation on the service and ideas for meeting needs more effectively. A sample questionnaire is provided for your use. It can be copied and inserted in an order of service or notice sheet and collected after the worship service.

It is also useful for long term planning if you do a survey of the needs perceived by members of the congregation. This survey will let your team know what needs exist within your church and community. Again, a sample survey is provided for distribution widely within the church.

Step 8 **Transport**

You may need to consider how disabled people who do not have their own transport may be able to travel to your Disability Sunday service. Advice should be available from local disability charities or social services as to forms of transport which may be made available.

Finally,

A useful resource for improving your Church's provision for disabled people is Through the Roof's Roofbreaker Guides, available to download from the website or to purchase for £2.00 excluding p+p.

Sample letter of invitation

(to be printed on church notepaper)

[date]

Dear

It's a real pleasure to invite you and your friends, relations and colleagues, to attend a Disability Sunday event on 4 October 2009 at *[11.00 am]* at our church, which is in *[Lupin Gardens, Ambridge]*

The main talk will focus on what the Bible really says about disability and on God's positive attitude towards disabled people. We have also asked a few members of our congregation to speak about their own experience of disability. We plan a drama and musical contributions by disabled people.

We would like to welcome anyone in our community who is affected by disability – you yourself or a member of your family may have a disability, or you may work with disabled people. We want the service to be a first step towards fully including disabled people in the life of our church. Our church building is accessible to wheelchair users and has an accessible toilet. An induction loop will be provided for hearing aid users.

If you have no transport and you need a lift, or if you have any questions, please call us on *[phone number]* as soon as possible and we will try to help.

With warmest good wishes

Draft news release

News Release

St Mark's Church in Ambridge is holding a Disability Sunday service on 4 October 2009 at 11.00 am. There will be an exciting meeting of teaching and worship, led by disabled people, focusing on the world of disability.

Members of the congregation will be sharing their own experience of disability, there will be a drama and musical contributions by disabled people and there will be a brief talk on disability from a Biblical perspective.

The church is accessible to wheelchair users. A British Sign Language interpreter for Deaf people will be provided at the service. Child care is also available.

In addition to the worship service, disability awareness will be the special focus of the children's programme with groups for all ages.

For more information contact: Name:

 Telephone:

Print the news release with a church letterhead, and post it, email it or fax it to local radio stations and newspapers in early September.

Give details of any other special contributions to be made by disabled people. Avoid using Christian jargon words or phrases. If you want an expert eye to be cast over your News Release before you send it, email a draft to info@throughtheroof.org and we'll be pleased to make constructive comments.

If your church is not manned continuously during office hours, make sure you give a mobile phone number as an alternative to the Church office. Nothing irritates media more than to be unable to get an immediate response to a question. Why not cultivate a relationship with your local reporter and invite them to come along?

Church Newsletter Items

Recruiting team members:

Many of you know the importance we attach to being fully inclusive of disabled people. We are planning to hold a Disability Sunday on 4 October 2009 with the following objectives:

- To show disabled people that God cares about them and their needs
- To raise awareness of disability and the needs of disabled people
- To give people affected by disability a voice
- To show that God responds to and uses disability in many different ways
- To show that including disabled people isn't a burden, but is a blessing and can be fun!

If you would like to serve on the planning team, please contact *[name]*.

Announcing the event:

The Disability Sunday is just *[number]* weeks away. Just to remind you, what we want to achieve on the day is:

- To show disabled people that God cares about them and their needs
- To raise awareness of disability and the needs of disabled people
- To give people affected by disability a voice
- To show that God responds to and uses disability in many different ways
- To show that including disabled people isn't necessarily a burden, but is a blessing and can be fun!

Please invite friends, family and neighbours who are disabled or who are affected by disability on Sunday 4 October 2009

Recruiting volunteers:

Volunteers are needed to help with Disability Sunday. If you can help with *[list needs here]* then please contact *[name]*

Disability Sunday - Accessibility Checklist

Note: This is a very basic checklist to alert you to possible difficulties in the accessibility of your church building. It should be noted that a positive answer to all the points does not mean that your church complies with a generally accepted accessibility standard such as the Churches for All Bronze Standard or Part M of the Building Regulations. For more information, seek advice from Through the Roof.

Basic Accessibility		Yes	No
1.	Is it possible to get from a parked car to the area used for worship without going up or down a step or stairs?		
2.	Is the slope of paths not greater than 5% (roughly 1:20)		
Ramps			
3.	Do ramps have a slope no greater than 1:12 and a width of no less than 1.2m?		
4.	Do ramps have handrails on both sides?		
Entrances and Exits			
5.	Is at least one major entrance to the building usable by wheelchair users?		
Doors and Doorways			
6.	Do doors have a clear opening of 800mm or more?		
7.	Can doors be opened easily by a wheelchair user or other disabled person?		
Floors			
8.	Is the floor level each side of doors?		
9.	Are the door thresholds a maximum 13mm high?		
Worship Space			
10.	Can the service be heard clearly throughout?		
11.	Is there an induction loop for hearing aid users?		
12.	Is there good lighting, avoiding shadows on those speaking or interpreting?		
13.	If an overhead projector is used, are there large print paper copies available for people who cannot see the screen?		
14.	Is there space for wheelchair users where they can sit with a friend?		
15.	Are there seats with arms and seats with extra legroom for people with mobility impairment?		
16.	Can people take communion without climbing steps?		
Toilets			
17.	Is there an accessible toilet for use by wheelchair users?		
Other areas			
18.	Can disabled people access refreshments?		

Guidelines for stewards and welcomers

DO	DON'T
<p><u>General</u> Treat disabled people as you would anyone else. Always speak directly to the person who has a disability. Always ask the person who has a disability if you can help him or her in any way. Whenever possible, seat disabled people with their friends or family. Try to be aware of people's hidden disabilities such as epilepsy or Alzheimer's disease, which may require assistance. Assume nothing - always ask!</p>	<p>Don't use negative terms such as "crippled" or "victim". Do not consider a companion or carer to be a conversational go-between.</p>
<p><u>Visual Impairment</u> Identify yourself by name and as a steward. Show a blind person to his or her seat. Ensure they know large print songsheets are available. Explain to a visually impaired person where things are located. Provide space for a guide-dog to lie down by removing a chair.</p>	<p>Don't push a visually impaired person - always allow them to take your arm.</p>
<p><u>Deafness and hearing loss</u> Ensure your face and mouth can be seen clearly. Look directly at the person and speak at normal speed with clear (not exaggerated) lip patterns.</p>	<p>Don't exaggerate or shout. Don't speak directly into the person's ear. Don't obscure your face</p>
<p><u>Speech Impairment</u> Give your whole, unhurried attention with good eye contact. Remember the person with a speech impairment may use another method of communication, such as writing.</p>	<p>Don't finish a sentence or word for the person. Don't get agitated or impatient</p>
<p><u>Mobility Impairment</u> Always ask a wheelchair user if she or he would like assistance before you help. Try to sit or crouch down to talk to wheelchair users so that eye contact is easier. Provide seats near the entrance for people with mobility difficulties to minimise walking.</p>	<p>Don't push a wheelchair user unless they ask you to. Don't hold on to or lean on a person's wheelchair.</p>
<p><u>Learning Disabilities</u> Be patient, give someone with learning disabilities plenty of time.</p>	<p>Don't assume the person cannot understand you.</p>

A Drama for Disability Sunday

“Hope Found” by Gayleen Gardner

Though simple in form, the message is powerful and one with which everyone can identify. The drama takes approximately 10 minutes and requires no props. Costumes for the Biblical characters are highly recommended.

(Scene: Woman enters, obviously agitated - talking to God. Upstage are four Biblical characters with backs to the audience. Modern day characters are seated in the audience. Each character either turns or rises to deliver their line. At the end of each line each character chooses a pose around the woman. 'All' refers to characters who have already spoken - excluding the woman.)

Woman: O God, no. Please. No. I can't do this. I can't face this. This is beyond me. I thought you loved me. OK. OK. I KNOW you love me but oh God this hurts too much. I feel so alone. I feel so far from you. What are you doing? What in this world are you doing?

Hannah: My name is Hannah. I know what it's like to feel alone. But I know how to worship and cling to the giver of life. He is my hope and salvation.

Job: My name is Job. I know what it's like to feel devastated.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Job: ...who gives and takes away. He is my hope and salvation.

David: My name is David. And I know what it's like to feel guilty.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

David: ...who takes away my sin. He is my hope and salvation.

Joshua: My name is Joshua. And I know what it's like to feel inadequate.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Joshua: ...who is my strength and my shield. He is my hope and salvation.

Barbara: My name is Barbara. And I know what it's like to be terminally ill.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Barbara: ...who heals in this life and the next. He is my hope and salvation.

Kim: My name is Kim. And I know what it's like to lose a child.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Kim: ...who holds each child in His hand. He is my hope and salvation.

Carol: My name is Carol. And I know what it's like to be divorced.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Carol: ...husband to the widow and defender of the defenceless. He is my hope and salvation.

Ken: My name is Ken. And I know what it's like to be addicted.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Ken: ...who died to set me free. He is my hope and salvation.

Disabled woman: My name is *[name]* and I know what it's like to be paralysed.

All: But I know how to worship and cling to the Lord

Disabled woman: ...who walks with me. He is my hope and salvation.

All: We know how to worship and cling to the Lord.

Woman: You - oh God - are my hope and salvation.

Director's Notes...

You hold in your hand a script that is simple and quite honestly unassuming on paper. But the simplicity and staging are very powerful and it is the intention that God will use this sketch to bring hope to each person in your congregation - no matter how obvious or hidden their heartbreak may be. The following are a few suggestions for casting and staging:

- Use your most dramatic actor or actress for the person in crisis. Their effectiveness is the key - their gender is not.
- When possible, you can use individuals from your congregation who really have struggled with illness or addiction or divorce. It is very effective for them to step out to the congregation.
- However, be prepared! Someone may think this is an open invitation to share!
- Having your Biblical characters in costume is recommended.
- Experiment with placement and posing. Hannah may kneel next to the woman, while David and Joshua stand, and Job is in a more humble, reclining position. Every character needs to speak to the woman, but they do not have to all be gathered too close around her. Your divorced character and addict are probably good ones to leave on the edges because that is often how they feel!
- We find the unison reading very powerful. If you don't have time to practise getting it to sound good then just have the individual characters say the entire line. Give it a try though - it works!

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Survey of Disability-Related Needs

1. Is a member of your family disabled? Yes No
2. Do you have a friend or neighbour who is disabled? Yes No
3. How does their disability affect them?

4. Does he/she attend church regularly? Yes No
5. If not, would he or she like to? Yes No
6. Does your friend or family member have any particular needs the church might be able to meet?
7. If your friend or family member would like to attend this church, what changes, if any, should we make?
 - Parking
 - Accessibility (please specify) _____
 - Induction loop
 - BSL interpreter
 - Large print material: songsheets, notice sheets, Bibles _____
 - Better lighting
 - Wheelchair space which does not obstruct aisles
 - Special provision for an adult or child with learning disabilities
 - One to one support for a child in Sunday School

Please provide contact details so that we can talk to you some more about meeting some of these needs:

Name _____ Telephone number _____

Address _____

Any other comments _____

What it means when people suffer: A Biblical survey

"What should we do when suffering comes?" is a universal question. It is our prayer that, through your use of this survey, the Lord will impress great truths from the Bible upon the hearts and minds of many who suffer.

The materials are divided into two basic sections. The first enumerates the biblical principles related to suffering, while the second suggests how to apply those principles.

Biblical principles related to suffering

After each of the principles there are letters indicating to whom it applies:

G = General B = Believers U = Unbelievers

1. Suffering is not always caused by sin nor does it necessarily indicate lack of spirituality (1 Cor. 4:9-14; John 9:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:22-31). G
2. However, the ultimate source of suffering is linked with sin, evil, and the curse of God (Gen. 3:14-19; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; Rom. 8:20-23) G
3. Removal of suffering is linked with redemption (Gen. 3:21--c.f. context of curse prior to this verse) and the ultimate triumph of righteousness (2 Pet. 3:5-7, 10; Rev. 21:1,4 and 22:2,3). G
4. Suffering and evil occur in the broader context of God's providence (Gen. 50:20; Job 1:12; 2:6). It is not fate or bad luck. G
5. Suffering can be negative or positive, depending on how you respond (Gen. 50:20; the Book of Job). Satan wants to turn us aside. (1 Pet. 5:8,9); God wants sufferings to strengthen us (Job). G
6. Suffering is to be anticipated in the light of God's character (1 Pet. 4:19; Job 23:10-13, 14; 1 Cor. 10:13; Isa. 55:9; Eccl. 11:5) so that we should not fall prey to despair (2 Cor. 4:8; Rom. 8:28-32, 37-39). G
7. Suffering indicates the vulnerability of our present state and the need for redemption (2 Cor. 5:1-5; Phil. 3:21). This points out that our greatest need is not just salvation of the body, but of the soul which continues past the grave (1 Pet. 1:6,9,24). G
8. Suffering tests where our real point of hope is (1 Pet. 1:6,13) and reveals the intent of our hearts (Job 2:9; Ps. 11:5, 17:1-5) because it makes us reflect on the real meaning of life (see the Psalms) . G
9. Suffering is used to increase our awareness of the sustaining power of God and to whom we owe our sustenance (Ps. 68:19; 2 Cor. 12:9,10), and it draws us closer to Him (Job 23:5,7,10) because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). G
10. God uses suffering to gain the praises of men both good and evil people (1 Pet. 1:6,7; John 9:13, 11:4; Rev. 11:13). G
11. God uses suffering to refine, perfect, strengthen, and keep us from falling (Ps. 66:8,9; Heb. 2:10, 12:10). B
12. Suffering allows the life of Christ to be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:7-11), bankrupting us, making us dependent on God (2 Cor. 12:9; Ps. 14:6). B

13. Suffering teaches us humility (2 Cor. 12:7), imparting the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11), for God is more concerned with character than comfort (Rom. 5:3,4; Heb. 12:10,11). Thus, the greatest good of the Christian life is not absence of pain but Christ likeness (2 Cor. 4:8-10; Rom. 8:28,29). B
14. Suffering can be a chastisement from God for sin and rebellion (Ps. 107:17; Isa. 24:5,6; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:29,30). G
15. Suffering is the only means in which moral evil enters into the consciousness of God (God-Isa. 63:9; Christ-Luke 9:22, 17:25, 24:26,46; Matt. 16:21; Heb. 2:10). G
16. Obedience and self-control is learned from suffering (Heb. 5:8) along with patience (Rom. 5:1-5) and refinement (James 1:2-8; Prov. 17:3), conforming us to His death (Phil 3:10; 2:1-11). B
17. Voluntary suffering is one way to demonstrate the love of God (2 Cor. 8:1,2,9). B
18. Suffering may be due to our personal failure, or our failure to employ our God-given resources in accord with wisdom (Prov. 19:16, 13:20, 11:24, 22:3, 27:12; Job 21). G
19. Temporary suffering may be due to those over us who are negligent (Num. 14:31-33), but on an ultimate basis we stand as individuals (Ezek. 18:10 and broad context). G
20. Suffering or pain is an indicator of or deterrent to continual bodily harm (Ps. 139). G
21. Suffering is part of the righteous struggle against sin (Heb. 12:4-13) and evil men (Ps. 27:12 and 37:14,15; 1 Pet. 2:18; 2 Tim. 3:1-13; Heb. 11: 36-40).

See suffering:

- for righteousness' sake, 1 Pet. 3:14
- for His sake, Phil. 1:29
- for the kingdom of God, 2 Thess. 1:5
- for the Gospel, 2 Tim. 2:9
- for injustice, 1 Pet. 2:19
- as Christians, 1 Pet. 4: 16
- for the name of Christ, Acts 5:41.

This indicates how the righteous become sharers in Christ's suffering (2 Cor. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:13) as sons (1 Pet. 5:8; Heb. 11:36-38). B

22. Satan uses suffering to cast aspersion on the character of God and His saints (Job 1,2). G
23. Suffering serves as a preliminary warning of the judgment to come to unbelievers (Luke 16; Rev. 20:10-15; 2 Kings 15:5). U
24. Satan uses suffering as an obstacle to evangelizing (Eph. 6:16-20; 2 Tim. 4:1-8, 15-17; 2 Cor. 4:7-18). B
25. Endurance of suffering is given as a cause for reward (2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:12) B
26. Suffering demonstrates the total commitment to Christ that we need in all that we do or say (2 Cor. 4) and demonstrates the need for the grace of God to sustain us. B

27. Suffering forces community and the administration of our gifts for the common good (1 Pet. 4:12; 1 Cor. 12; Phil. 4:12-15). B
28. Suffering indicates that real faith can survive both calamity and prosperity (Job 42:7-17). B
29. Suffering teaches us that sustenance for our lives is not found totally in our physical life but in the working of God upon the heart. B
30. Suffering binds Christians together into a common or joint purpose (Rev. 1:9). B
31. Suffering produces discernment and knowledge and teaches us His statutes (Ps. 119:66,67,71). B
32. Through suffering God is able to obtain a broken and contrite spirit which He desires (Ps. 51:16,17; Ps. 32). G
33. Suffering causes us to discipline our minds by making us focus our hope on the grace to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:6,13 and 2:5). G
34. Suffering can be used as a nullifier to the counsel of the nations and the frustration of their plans (Rev. 17,18; Ps. 33:10). U
35. God uses suffering to humble us so that He can exalt us at the proper time (1 Pet. 5:6,7 and broad context) . B
36. Suffering teaches us to number our days so we can present to God a heart of wisdom (Ps. 90: 7-12). B
37. Because ultimate judgment is not yet final, current suffering must be viewed as a necessary complement to this life (1 Pet. 5:10; Phil. 3:20,21). G
38. Suffering, as a complement to evil, will be the wages of the ungodly for their rebellion (2 Pet. 2:13 and 3:7). Therefore, suffering serves as a warning to the ungodly. U
39. Suffering is valuable to godliness when coupled with contentment (1 Tim. 6:6). B
40. Suffering is sometimes necessary to win the lost (2 Tim. 2:8-10 and 4:5,6; 2 Cor. 1:1-11). B
41. Sufferings of the righteous strengthen and allow one to comfort others who are weak or are suffering (Phil. 1:12-14,20 and 2:17; 2 Cor. 1:3-11 and 7:6,7; Heb. 2:18). B
42. Suffering is temporary and in light of its momentary affliction is nothing compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8). B
43. Since righteousness does not exempt us from suffering, this should teach us that there is a warfare occurring on a much higher plane, which, until complete, will allow suffering to continue. G
44. God desires truth in our innermost being, and one way He does it is through suffering (Ps. 51:6 and 119:17). B
45. The equity for suffering will be found in the next life (Ps. 58:10,11; Luke 16:19-31, especially v.25; 1 Pet. 2:12). B
46. Suffering is always coupled with a greater source of grace (2 Tim. 1:7,8 and 4:16-18; 1 Pet. 4:14; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Cor. 10:13). B
47. Suffering can lead to the repentance of sin (Ps. 32; 2 Cor. 7:5-11). G

48. Suffering teaches us as humans that we are frail and weak, dependent for hope on someone greater (Ps. 14:6 and 11:1). G
49. Suffering of the righteous (vengeance) will be a main cause for the judgment of the wicked (Ps. 12:5; Rev. 6:9-11). U
50. Suffering teaches us to give thanks in times of sorrow (2 Cor. 1:11). B
51. Suffering increases faith (Gen. 22; Ps. 46:10; Jer. 29:11). B
52. Suffering allows God to manifest His care (Ps. 56:8). B
53. Suffering stretches our hope (Job 13:14-15). B
54. When suffering seems to have no meaning in the physical realm it does have meaning in the spiritual realm (Job 1-3). Remember, Job did not know the cause or reason for his sufferings. G
55. Suffering is used to break the will of the rebellious (Rev. 11:13). Pain plants the flag of reality in the fortress of a rebel heart. C.S. Lewis, "God whispers in our pleasure but shouts in our pain."
56. When suffering remains unanswered, it does not mean God has forgotten, only that resolution must wait for the life to come (Ps. 9:12,18). G
57. Suffering indicates that true hope changes sorrow but does not obliterate it. G
58. Suffering is not a cause for being ashamed (2 Tim, 1:12). B

The Principles Logically Applied

As we approach the subject of suffering with the Scriptures, the complete "why" of suffering is never found. Instead, we must rest on the character of God (Deut. 29:29; Isa. 55:8,9) and trust that all suffering takes place within the appointed boundaries of God. This does not mean that we are not to pursue the subject, only that we are to bow to the truth which God has given us, with the amount of explanation He has revealed.

As we enter the realm of suffering, we are immediately caught by a foundational principle that human suffering cannot be understood in purely human or naturalistic terms. Rather, it must encompass the heavenly counterpart, the spiritual realm. From the physical plane, we suppose God is trapped in inconsistency; how can a holy God allow evil and any complement of it. Here we must bow to mystery, but not to mystery without direction. For in the question of evil, which poses the greatest threat to God and His character -- especially His holiness - we find that He has given us some guidelines to allow us to rest in His revealed character.

1. God's ultimate glory is found with His triumph over all evil and sin and any of its counterparts, such as suffering and wickedness (Rev. 21:1-5).
2. In His triumph, He reveals that suffering is intricately linked with Satan, evil, and the fall (death), and the curse of God upon the earth (Rev. 20:10-15, 21:1-5, 22:1-5; Gen. 3:14-19,21; 2 Pet. 3:5-7,10; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; Rom. 8:20-23).
3. He allows evil and suffering to occur only within the broad context of His providence, for God never relinquishes control of His omnipotent rule, which gives hope to those who suffer.
4. With the entrance of sin and suffering into the world, not all subsequent suffering is due to immediate sin or wrong-doing or serves as an act of

punishment, for in the book of Job, the dialogue in heaven has established Job's innocence before God (Job 1:7,8).

5. This means that suffering is a natural counterpart to life within a fallen world. In the end, God will create a new heaven and earth where there are no tears, death, mourning, crying, or pain; for the first heaven and earth will have passed away with the removal of all the ungodly -- including Satan and his demon hosts -- and upon the new heaven and earth we will find the godly.
6. This enlightens us as to five facts:
 - a. God's ultimate justice transcends the earthly and temporal.
 - b. God uses that which opposes His character to glorify Himself (Prov. 16:4).
 - c. Time, which allows for the existence of sin and evil, poses no threat to God's character as long as victory and equity are assured.
 - d. The ultimate answer to suffering rests in the justice, wisdom, and knowledge of a transcendent God.
 - e. Suffering remains because mortality has not put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

Suffering stands as a neutral test because two opposing personalities are using it for their own ends, one for good and one for evil.

Satan uses it to glorify himself by:

1. Impugning God's character
2. Opposing the saints
3. Hindering the work of redemption
4. Verifying his own power
5. Causing disunity-the contradiction to a harmonious God
6. Furthering his own kingdom
7. Nullifying sanctification

God uses suffering to glorify Himself by:

1. Using it as a warning device in the physical makeup of a person
2. Bringing joy out of despair
3. Building character in people
4. Breaking the will of the ungodly
5. Sanctifying the inner person
6. Judging sin with its own product
7. Eliminating sin
8. Warning people of God's ultimate judgment
9. Testing the character of faith in His saints
10. Foiling the counsel of the ungodly
11. Bringing the praise of the wicked in His day of visitation
12. Winning the lost
13. Imparting knowledge of Himself
14. Teaching people dependence on Him
15. Bringing reward
16. Giving us the knowledge of Christ
17. Teaching us to give thanks in all things
18. Disciplining His saints
19. Allowing us to experience more of God's comfort
20. Perceiving the outcome of wrong moral and natural choices

As humans, we may face it by:

1. Wanting to remake the world
2. Anticipating it
3. Crying in self-pity
4. Rebelling against it
5. Resigning ourselves to it
6. Looking for God in it
7. Waiting on God even if He's not perceived

Notes for Disability Sunday Sermon

To set the scene:

Let me paint a picture. If it were possible to gather together all the disabled people in the world into one nation, that mythical nation would number 650 million men, women and children. That's more than ten times the population of the United Kingdom. That nation would be the world's third largest country, after China and India. (World Health Organisation statistic)

That nation would have a number of unique characteristics. That nation would...

- have the least access to education - because disabled people receive little or no education in developing countries
- have the lowest proportion in the world of its population in employment
- be the poorest nation on earth, because disabled people are the poorest of the poor
- have the least access to any sort of transport - poverty again
- be the least evangelised nation with the lowest proportion involved in a church

Numbers of disabled people in the UK:

- More than 15% of the UK population are disabled (approximately 9.8 million)
- About 6.9 million disabled people are of working age (16% of the working population)
- Disabled people are five times as likely as non-disabled people to be out of work
- Only about 8% of disabled people use wheelchairs
- 3% of all children under 16 have one or more disabilities
- One in four people is disabled or is close to someone who is
- 95% of the population will experience disability at some point in their lives

Don't forget, if each disabled person in the UK has only one person caring for them, there are 19m people affected by disability. Think about it, if your husband, wife, child or parent who is a wheelchair user can't get into your church, then the whole family can't get into the church.

As Christians, we need to understand the issues that both disabled people and carers face. The sad reality is that our churches often reflect society's lack of understanding and care and these people are not present.

Now you see why Jesus gave such a high priority to people with disabilities. There were so many of them! Let's think about Jesus' response - He gave a high priority to people with disabilities.

In the Gospels 35 specific miracles are recorded.

3 cases of raising the dead: (all examples of his care for the carers)

- the widow's son at Nain
- Jairus' daughter
- Lazarus at Bethany

9 miracles which break the natural laws of physics which include;

- feeding the 5000
- walking on water
- calming the storm
- turning water into wine

23 miracles involving disabled people

- 6 involve mental illness
- 17 (half the total number of recorded miracles) involve physical disability including, blindness, deafness, paralysis, a withered hand and leprosy

So why don't we see disabled people in our churches? One reason is that our society traditionally approaches disability from the **medical model** of disability. This model sees disabled people as 'having a problem', which needs 'fixing or curing'. The emphasis is on what is 'wrong' with them, and they are treated as in need of healing or in need of pity and having to be cared for. This has often led to disabled people losing control over their lives – e.g. they have to go to bed when the carer can put them to bed, not when they choose to.

The better model, and most importantly, the model chosen by disabled people is the **social model** of disability. This looks at the environment to see what can be changed to allow a disabled person to take part on equal terms with non disabled people. Thus, a wheelchair user is not disabled in an environment where doors are wide, door furniture is within their reach, floors are flat and smooth and changes in level are accomplished by the use of ramps and lifts.

Using of the social model of disability has led to the growth of more independent living, where disabled people employ their own personal assistants to help with personal care, housework, going out, socialising, shopping etc. Thus the disabled person retains control of their lives and is able to make their own contribution to society and to church life.

Some helpful Biblical references to disability

2 Samuel 9: David & Mephibosheth

Exodus 4: 10-12: Moses - God takes responsibility for disability

Luke 4: 14-21: Jesus' Messiahship

Luke 5: 17-26: Friends lower a paralysed man through the roof

The paralysed man's friends worked together to make sure he made contact with Jesus. The story makes it clear that the important issue Jesus dealt with was that of forgiveness of sins - the healing of the man served to illustrate that Jesus is God and has the power to forgive sins. It is not known whether the man remained fully healthy for the rest of his life, but the important thing is that he would be with Jesus in eternity.

Luke 14: 15-24: Filling God's house

This passage reveals the heart of God - God's house will be full when it includes marginalised people - those who are poor, disabled, despised etc.

The passage does not say that the guests are to be healed, only that they are to be included.

Psalm 139: God designing us

In Psalm 139, we are exhorted to thank God for the way He made us.

2 Corinthians 12: 7-10: God's power revealed in weakness

It can be argued that a powerful reason for God choosing to use disability and weakness is so that it becomes clear that He is not dependent on the things which the world sees as weakness.

Children's Activities age 5-11

Introductory activity

Using a chocolate bar and what appears to be an empty crisp packet (but the packet actually contains a £1 coin hidden in the corner), offer the children a choice between the two - being careful to hide the coin by holding the packet by that corner.

Hopefully the children will choose the chocolate bar!

You can then reveal that the better choice would actually have been the crisp packet because of its hidden contents.

Link this activity to 1 Samuel 16:7 and the truth that God looks more at what we are like on the inside than at our outward appearance.

Discussion

Divide the children into age groups for a short discussion about how we feel when we first meet someone with a disability.

NB. Remember to emphasise that not all disabilities are obvious on the outside.

"Feelings" activity

This activity should be done while the children are still divided into age groups.

Give each child a large plain paper bag on which they can draw a face. On the outside the children can write words to describe the feelings we show on the outside. On pieces of paper the children can write words to describe the feelings we hide on the inside. These pieces of paper can be placed inside the paper bag.

NB. Younger children may find it easier to draw simple pictures to describe feelings.

During this activity ask the children to consider especially how those with disabilities might feel. Encourage them to think about positive feelings as well as more negative ones!

Through the Roof

Act out with the children the story of the disabled man lowered through the roof to Jesus (Luke 5: 17-26). All the children can be involved because those without key parts can form the crowd in the house.

Bring out the following points from the story:

- Sometimes it can be difficult for those with disabilities to come to church or to feel included
- We can all help one another like the four friends helped the disabled man
- Jesus forgave the man and helped him to feel better inside before He healed him on the outside

Disability awareness activities

Give out a wrapped sweet (e.g. Starburst) to each child. Ask the children to put their "good" hand (the one they write with) behind their back and unwrap the sweet with the other hand. Talk to the children about the difficulties experienced by those who do not have full use of their hands.

Play a game of "Chinese Whispers". Talk to the children afterwards about how it feels not to know what others are saying and use this to raise awareness of the difficulties of hearing impairment.

Put out two or three chairs in various parts of the room. Blindfold a child and ask another child to guide them to a chair. Make sure there are some narrow 'pinch points' (which can be made with spare chairs) and other obstructions. Discuss the difficulties experienced by those who are visually impaired.

Consider inviting someone from your congregation who has a disability to talk to the children about how God helps them.

Conclusion

Conclude with a prayer time, in groups, encouraging the children to pray about what they have learnt and for those they know who are disabled.

Youth Programme - Age 11+

Introductory comments

How extraordinary - the Lord of Glory makes himself at home in ordinary human beings. The Bible calls us temples of the living God. Even more remarkable: sometimes God chooses broken temples to show the surpassing riches of His grace.

Some people are born without a capacity most of us take for granted. Other people lose something they once enjoyed. But God loves us all and He also loves to live in broken people. So if you think learning about disability is just about wheelchair ramps and disabled parking, think again. Disabled people can teach us some important lessons about being human. They show us that what you see is not necessarily what you get. And they help us to see that, in a broken world, everyone is somehow broken.

Focus question

How do you think you'd feel if you had to live without one or more of your physical capabilities? What do you think you would miss the most?

Some of the people you're about to hear don't speak very clearly, so you'll have to listen carefully. It'll be worth it. They may be difficult to understand, but they are **thinking** very clearly.

Play Shattered Temples video

Discussion questions

1. Describe your first impression of these stories. What thoughts and feelings did you have? Any surprises?
2. Did anyone in this story remind you of someone you know? Can you tell us about that?
3. Did you identify with someone in this story? Can you tell us about that?
4. Read John 9:1-7 (or, preferably, the whole chapter)
 - a. What strikes you about the disciples' assumptions toward the blind man?
 - b. Have you ever come across that assumption - that people are broken because they or their parents sinned?
 - c. What do you make of Jesus' response?
 - d. Have you ever seen God glorified by healing someone? How did you feel about that?
5. Read Psalms 103 and 147
 - a. How is the healing power of God described? His compassion?
 - b. Why doesn't God heal everyone?
6. 'Have you ever seen God glorified by not healing someone? How did you feel about that?
7. What has spoken to you particularly as we have talked? Is there something you need to apply to your life? How can we pray for you?

Get Physical

If you want to do something to produce at least a little empathy for disabled people, try these simulations. Leave plenty of time to talk about thoughts and feelings afterwards. Take great care with these exercises - make sure they are closely supervised to avoid accidents.

- Borrow a couple of wheelchairs and have youngsters wheel around church, and open heavy doors without putting their weight on their feet and see what it is like to see the world from a chair
- Blindfold youngsters and have them fill a cup from a jug
- Blindfold youngsters and let them try to get from point A to point B
- Construct a simple dyslexia experience by asking youngsters to follow a simple maze with a pencil while looking at the maze in a mirror
- Have youngsters negotiate a course on crutches. Make sure you include some steps (not a whole flight of stairs!).
- Have youngsters try to get a message by reading lips.

More than just a day

We're sure you will find that your Disability Sunday opens new doors for your church and inspires people to reflect God's heart for disabled people all the more, you won't want to limit yourself to just one Disability Sunday.

There's two important steps you can take.

- Make Disability Sunday an annual event and broaden the theme to include a variety of ways in which God works through pain, suffering and brokenness.
- Develop a disability ministry in your church. The Disability Sunday will very likely have uncovered new areas for ministry and people will have stepped forward. Through the Roof has a number of resources available for your church to begin a disability ministry. Those resources are listed on our website: www.throughtheroof.org . Other specialist Christian disability ministries will be able to help you with your work. Torch Trust www.torchtrust.org will help you with resources for blind and partially sighted people, Causeway PROSPECTS www.prospects.org.uk, adults with learning disabilities, Hands Together www.handstogether.org.uk and Christian DeafLink www.deafchristian.org.uk for deaf people.