

God has a Mission for People with Disability

— By Dr. Ng

*“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly and despised things of the world, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast in His presence”
(1 Corinthians 1:26-29).*

God has given the “foolish,” “weak,” “lowly,” and “despised” an important role in His mission by using them to break the strongholds of pride and conceit which are such a barrier to the gospel impacting people and nations. God loves to reveal his glory through those with disability, who in the world’s eyes, are foolish, weak, lowly (John 9). What an imagination God has! Bringing in an upside-down kingdom, one that is so counter-cultural to western ideals and the ideals in any other religion.

This is exactly why disability has such a profound impact in the mission field. It demonstrates how our awesome powerful God shows His power and achieves His purpose through vulnerable and struggling bodies. Yet the mission movement has not always realized this, and people with disability have often been excluded from the field. This means that the Body of Christ is incomplete, and the impact of missions is blunted.

However, thanks be to God that some people with disability slip through the mission selection panels, medical clearances, and psychological testing, and end up serving in mission. Or, what is more often the case, an existing missionary acquires a disability while serving. Those who remain and serve, often against significant odds, come to realize that God doesn’t work despite their disabilities. Often, He chooses to work through their disabilities.

Disability is a unique offering for a missionary and part of one’s unique God-given make up. For example, disability removes the power dynamic in the field. The powerful, educated, and rich missionary is viewed as living in some sort of castle in the clouds. Disability can tear those walls down. The woman who struggles with pain, the man who is struggling with a walking problem, or the parents struggling with a child’s learning disability can engage with people who would otherwise feel a world apart. A friend working in Bangladesh explained how when people see his deformity, it cuts through an unhealthy power dynamic. Suddenly they see him as a real and down-to-earth person, and

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IN FOCUS



Just Like Everyone Else

— By Amy Wilson, Editor

This issue of Barnabas is focused upon how those with or affected by disabilities and special needs overcome and are used by God. I have several family members with disabilities, so I have had my lifetime to observe and reflect upon the lives of those with disabilities. My conclusion? They are just like everyone else in this world. They have struggles, they have high days and low days, and they face prejudice and

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they open up and share about their own disability or issue. In the case described, when the woman saw that he had a similar disability to her son, she removed her Burqa headress to have a closer look!

Visible disability also prompts people to ask questions about our worldview. The following are some questions I have been asked in the mission field about my personal experience in disability. “How did God let this happen to you?” “Have you tried [x,y,z] miraculous cure?” “How can you leave your own country where the services for disability are so great and serve here?” The answers to each of these questions is a chance to share about who Jesus is and His plan for humanity. My answer is to share the gospel:

- We are created in the image of God.
- Our weakness reminds us of our dependence on God.
- Jesus loves us in spite of our short fallings.
- He died for all sinners – disabled or not.
- God created us with a disability for his unique and sovereign purpose.

A Christian worldview is totally revolutionary for disability in the countries in which we work. In fact, in my experience in India, responding to disability and overcoming unhealthy karmic beliefs cannot happen without the sort of transformation and alternative world view that the Christian gospel brings.

The challenge for the mission movement is to work to help those with disability to serve and remain serving in missions. A traditional model of missions may at times be difficult, but there are many other models where the mission environment can be conducive for people with disability. It just takes vision and creativity! ■

About the Author Dr. Ng

Dr. Ng is writing a book of these stories. It is called the Treasures of the Church and shows how God’s glory is revealed in missions through people with disability. If you have any stories you want to share, please contact Dave Deuel at ddeuel1043@aol.com.

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being left out, just as most everyone else in this world does at some point in their lives. They have family and friends who support and encourage them and come to their rescue as the Good Samaritan, just as all of us hopefully do at some points in our lives.

I think the largest difference I have observed is that their struggles are often noticed more by the rest of the world because of the physical or emotional differences they demonstrate. Those of us without these noticeable differences may not have the same reaction, good or bad, from the rest of the world, because our struggles may be more hidden. I do not think the struggles are any less or more for people with disabilities than “the rest of the world,” just as I do not believe they are any less used by God.

That is my hope and prayer for this issue, that people will realize that these individuals need love, support, cheering, and encouragement like everyone else in the world, and that they are a precious, PLANNED, gift from God—made in his image—just as everyone else. Please do not miss the opportunity to be ministered to BY these individuals. God gives us many examples in His word and reminds us of how we can receive ministry from those with disabilities. A great example is with the story of the blind man, found in John 9, where one of his disciples is questioning whether a man was born blind because of sin. “‘It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,’ Jesus answered. ‘This happened so the power of God could be seen in him’” (John 9:1-3). May God pierce your heart and, potentially change your thinking, as you read. ■



“Seeing” God in New Ways

— *By Becky Davidson*

I have been blind since birth due to being born prematurely and being placed in an incubator. The oxygen that saved my life burned my retinas leaving me with just a tiny bit of peripheral vision in my right eye.

My husband, Ron, started experiencing vision loss at age 14. He lost one eye in an industrial accident at age 19 and lost his remaining sight in 2000.

Blindness and vision loss are possibly the least understood and the most feared disability. My aunt told my mom that “if God didn’t think you could handle having a blind child, He wouldn’t have given you one.” My parents did everything they could to insure I had every available opportunity. Ron’s family did not shelter him, either. Though his parents were told that his best option was to be institutionalized, they flatly refused and raised him to be independent.

Both of us live active, productive lives, believing that God has given us gifts and talents both because of and maybe despite our being blind. We spend much time explaining how we do ordinary things in different ways, making full use of our remaining senses and the technology and other adapted items available to us.

Growing up with a disability presents its own challenges. As a teenager, I was very conscious of being “different” and that is not something that teens particularly enjoy. There comes a point when you decide to make peace with your life and go forward from there. For me that happened when a renowned vision specialist told me unequivocally that I would not be able to have what was then a new surgery to give me sight. My retinas were just too far gone. I walked away from that meeting and told God that I understood that being blind was His plan for my life. I accepted that and committed myself to being the blind person He intended, and still intends, me

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“Seeing” God in New Ways

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to be. That was a defining moment for me, putting my trust in God and moving forward in relationship with Him.

We all have difficulties to overcome at some point in our lives. It may be a disability, loss, or other life circumstance. We can and do ask “why?” Trusting in God and His plan, recognizing that He has given us talents and abilities can bring both peace and motivation to walk forward in faith. Is it always easy? No. In our experience, though, it is worth making the effort, connecting with God in prayer, even on those days when you would rather pull the covers over your head and go back to sleep! God is trustworthy ... and He is faithful! ■

About the Author Becky Davidson

I am currently Manager of Consumer Outreach and Graduate Support at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, a position I've held since June, 1999. I have a Masters degree in Public Administration from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Prior to joining Guiding Eyes I worked for 24 years as an Employment and Training Counselor in Western New York State.

I am past Chair of the New York State Rehabilitation Council, and Past President of Guide Dog Users, Inc. a national consumer organization. I am also past president of the Mount Kisco Lions Club.

I have also served on Westchester County's Transportation Advisory Committee, Accessible Pedestrian Signals coalition and Emergency Preparedness Committee for people with Disabilities.

Lawson, a male yellow Labrador retriever, is my 3rd guide dog

Ron grew up in Kansas, one of 6 boys. He worked a variety of jobs before having a long and successful career as a cabinet maker and furniture builder. In 2000, when vision loss led to early retirement, he took up wood-carving. He soon discovered a new and unique outlet for his creative talent. His carvings have won many prizes and are an expression of some of his many interests as well. In addition to carving Ron loves to cook, especially on the grill and in his smoker. He is an active member of the Charlotte wood-carvers club and also likes to travel, read and spend time with his guide dog, a black Labrador Retriever named Clarissa.

This month, our team will transition our Team Director, Rosemary Sabatino, to our Member Care Director. Rosemary has faithfully served our team within the role of Director for the last 8 years. Tami Snowden, who has been with our team for the last 5 years, will now serve as our Team Director. Please join us all in prayer for these ladies, and our team, as we work together through this time of transition. We are grateful for both of these ladies and how they serve our team and our Lord!



Tami Snowden

Rosemary Sabatino

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES



Dedicated to children who hear their Father's voice



Ellie is a wife and mother of 3 kids, with her first daughter being born with Cytomegalovirus (CMV). When she is able, she spends her time advocating for increased awareness about the virus and the development of a vaccine. She also enjoys spending time outside, crafting, hanging out with her family and writing a blog. She blogs at kanderichards.blogspot.com. She and her husband live outside of Raleigh, NC with their 3 kids.

Siblings of Those With Disabilities

When I was pregnant with my second child I would often think about what kind of older brother my first born would be. Would he be protective? Would he help his younger sister? Would he include her? Would he speak for her? (This is something my mother said my older brother always did for me.) I was so excited to have a second baby: a friend for my first, someone to confide in, a helper.

When my daughter was born with bilateral hearing loss and neurological delays from the effects of Cytomegalovirus (CMV), all these thoughts went out the window. At the time of her diagnosis I was already struggling to parent two children and most of my attention was on her. My son, a pretty easy going two-and-a-half-year-old, of course wanted my attention. However, he relished the frequent visitors that came in the form of grandparents and close friends and family who were there to help.

It wasn't until later, after the dust settled and the doctor and therapy appointments were in full swing, that I began to think what Eli may be giving up by having a sister with special needs. He didn't ask for a sister, much less one with special needs, he thoroughly enjoyed being the only child.

Over the last three years he has grown in his role as the older brother. He plays with Hannah just like he would any other child and pays no attention to her cochlear implants or her physical delays. To him she's his sister, that is all he knows.

When someone asks about "those things on your sister's ears" he quickly and confidently answers that they help her to hear, and if she doesn't have them she can't hear you. Yes, part of this is the innocence of a five-year-old, but the other part is his love for his sister.

God gave our family Hannah. Not only her Dad and me, but our entire family. Eli is part of that. He will hear things and see things through Hannah's life that may be hard, but he will also get to rejoice in every milestone she achieves. I love hearing him cheer for her when she tries to speak a new word or when she colors a picture.

Eli has learned to pray by praying for Hannah. He prayed she would walk and got to witness her doing it! He prays that her speech will come along, and I look forward to the Lord showing His grace and allowing that to happen.

If he cheers and prays for these seemingly small things now, I can only imagine how he will continue to encourage and lift her up as they grow together.

So yes, to the world it may look as if Eli had to "give up" many things by having a special needs sister, but I know he is gaining care and compassion for others, an empathetic heart, and so much more in return. ■



Gnarled Trees

There is a children's book called "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" by Eric Carle in which many pictures answer the question. For me, being in God's creation is the most uplifting part of the world that I love to see—especially trees. The green leaves on trees have such a calming and rejuvenating influence on me. However I have never paid much attention to the trunks.

As I have been traveling through remote areas, bumping along dusty roads in crowded auto-rickshaws, I cannot easily look up to the tops of trees, but I am noticing many trunks. In several villages I have seen, met, shared and prayed with many persons, adults and children, with disabilities. Then riding back one evening—I "saw" the comparison. Like many of the people I had just been sharing with, so many trees are bent over in various angles and many have "gnarls"—all kinds of growths and deformities along the trunk. I have been touching those gnarls,

praying over them, often lifting downcast, discouraged faces to look into their eyes. In those eyes I see pain, grief, hopelessness, and sometimes tears flow as the wells of grief spill over. Often though, especially from a child's eyes, I see a sparkle, a glimmer of hope and smiles.

O Lord, I can do so little, touching those deformities, but You, God can do so much; I pray for your strong, warm embrace to lift each one. Only you see beyond the rough, scared, twisted exteriors into the heart of each one, and I pray Your look brings Your love.

In these sparkling children who are like the trees, there is strength that endures harsh winds and the long hot draughts. They are looking up and forward to the hope that tomorrow may bring.

Some of the trees have "Burls," those really large, misshapen outgrowths. I have recently learned that those we see as so unsightly are highly prized for making the most beautiful trays, tables, and other treasures. Wow, how can that be? What we may call "deformed" is the most valuable! To be honest, I am still processing this. I know that each one is a very precious child, created in his Father's image. God sees so far beyond the exterior that I see, He sees the souls and spirits of each one of His creation. I believe that He is still saying "It," every child He has created "Is Good." ■

"We are grateful to ML, who needs to remain anonymous due to her work location, for the beautiful devotion she wrote for this issue!"



Making it easier to
bring healing and
hope to children
in crisis

Healing and Hope for Children in Crisis

NEWS
EVENTS
RESOURCES

Resources

*CCTI is excited to offer our latest Module for
Disabilities, coming later this year!
Please be looking for it!*

Websites:

Examples of Therapy
Car-ynne4kids.org

Medical Ministries
<https://cure.org>

Books:

Helping Kids Include Kids with Disabilities
By Barbara Newman

Blessed Are the Misfits
By Brant Hansen

*Disability and The Gospel: How God Uses
Our Brokenness to Display His Grace*
By Michael S. Beates

Movie:

The Dropbox
Rent at amazon
Youtube **<https://youtu.be/5bzzBCWSNdg>**



For Information On:

• **CCTI Curriculum—**

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