

# Lutheran Women in Mission

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## **Not a Mistake!** *by Marlys Taege Moberg*

### **Opening**

Sing "O God of Mercy, God of Light" (*LW 397, TLH 439, LBW 425*) or "Wake Us, O Lord, to Human Need" (*All God's People Sing 250*).

### **Introduction**

Today Christians with disabilities recognize their God-given value and expect to be treated as equals. They want to be seen as people first, rather than as "the disabled." However, because we live in a world that seeks perfection and "quality of life," we often isolate people who have disabilities. We may even label them as damaged goods, as candidates for abortion or euthanasia.



### **Created by God**

Even though humanity has been marred by sin, in God's eyes ALL people are valuable. Why?

- **Psalm 139:14**
- **Genesis 1:26**
- **John 3:16**
- **Ephesians 2:10**

Yes, we all bear God's designer label. We are His masterpiece, made in His image, placed here for a purpose and redeemed through the death of our Maker's only Son! That's real value!

God made no mistake when He created us. How can we be sure of this?

See **1 Corinthians 12:4, 11, 18-22, 26**.

Even with a disability-whether that be a physical, vision, hearing, developmental, mental or environmental impairment-God can use us as we are. How is this demonstrated in the following verses?

- **Exodus 4:10-12**
- **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

### **This Fallen World**

Indirectly sin and Satan are the source of our disabilities. We live in a fallen world, where

disability can be caused by genetic abnormalities and/or environmental factors (disease, accidents, chemicals, wars, drug and alcohol abuse, immoral living, spousal battering and child abuse). How is this demonstrated in the case of:

- Mephibosheth (**2 Samuel 4:4**)?
- Samson (**Judges 16:1,4,18-22**)?

To some extent in this fallen world, all of us are only TABs (temporarily able-bodied). So why does a loving God allow disability to occur?

- **1 Corinthians 1:26-29**
- **John 9:1-3**

We may never fully understand the "why" of disability until we reach heaven. Almighty God does not have to explain His reasons to us. But when we trust our loving Lord, He can and will use each of us as we are. How?

- **Romans 8:28**
- **Jeremiah 29:11**
- **1 Corinthians 12:7, 11**

### Reaching Out

Because the Jewish leaders refused to believe that the man in John 9 had been blind, they questioned his parents. How did the parents answer? What did they fear? (see **John 9:18-23**).

What do we fear in regard to befriending people with disabilities?

Yet what does God expect of us?

- **Matthew 28:19-20**
- **Luke 14:13-14**
- **1 Thessalonians 5:11**
- **Galatians 6:9-10** What blessings does He promise us when we do this (v. 9)?

We fulfill God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves when we support people with disabilities. Through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the government has taken the lead in recognizing that people with disabilities have rights and deserve respect. The ADA has exempted the church from these regulations, but God does not exempt us. What could your church do to become more welcoming to people with disabilities? What can you do?

### Close with prayer:

Gracious Lord, Thank You for creating us and placing us here on earth at this time to serve You. Help us to enthusiastically share Your Good News with everyone, including those who have disabilities. Enable our congregation to welcome all people so they may know You and grow in Christian faith, love and service through Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

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### Helping Your Church Become Accessible

At least 20% of all people have some type of disability-that's over 50 million Americans and

more than 500 million worldwide, a vast mission field! The A,B,Cs of accessibility and inclusion are:

**Attitude**-A welcoming attitude is more important than architectural improvements. Begin with a Disability Awareness Sunday. Resources, including a litany and a brochure, "Feeling Comfortable with Persons Who Have Disabilities," are available from Bethesda's National Christian Resource Center (1-800-369-INFO). Single copies are free.

**Building**-Accessibility accommodations can begin with inexpensive improvements and additions such as:

- Large-print Bibles and bulletins.
- A paper-cup holder near drinking fountains so wheelchair users can get a drink.
- Pew cuts, so people in wheelchairs can sit with their families.
- A radio transceiver system so people with hearing aids can hear the pastor directly through a headpiece, rather than having his words drowned out by sounds of nearby children and adults.
- A well-lit sanctuary so people with vision problems can read printed materials more easily and so people who read lips can see the pastor clearly.
- A ramp if the church has steps. This will also benefit parents with small children, as well as others for whom steps are difficult.

### **Communication**

- Publicize your accessibility. They won't come if they don't know about your accommodations.
  - Listen. If you don't understand what they say, ask them to repeat. They will appreciate your attention.
  - Include people with disabilities on congregational committees. Ask them what they need. Enable them to be of service to others.
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