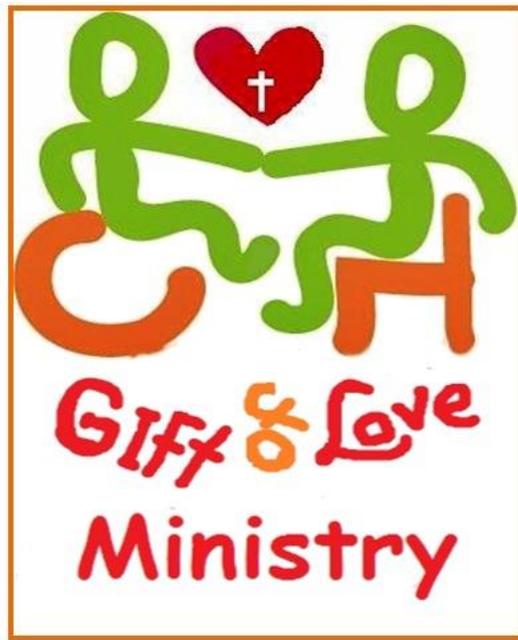




MINISTRY



SUNDAY SCHOOL AND DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

***Connecting People with
Disabilities
to the Body of Christ***

Index

Presentation

Introduction

- 1- Vision, Mission and Strategy**
- 2- What the Bible Says**
- 3- Disabilities Today**
- 4- Consequences of Deficiencies**
- 5- Intellectual Disabilities**
- 6- Downs Syndrome**
- 7- Cerebral Palsy and Physical Limitations**
- 8- Autism**
- 9- Deafness**
- 10- Blindness**
- 11- Teachers Teaching People with Disabilities**

Conclusion

Acknowledgements

Annexs

Presentation

This manual is a compilation of materials that are used to train workers for the “Spiritual Integration for People with Disabilities” Project, which has been improved with the hope that it can better serve as a consulting material for anyone interested in fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to take His Word to all people.

It would be a lie to say that if you read this manual you will be completely prepared to work successfully with disabled people and be able to take them to the feet of Christ. This manual only provides you with the technical knowledge and needed methodologies to understand and develop a better way to administer this wonderful work, but you must never forget that this is a spiritual labor and without the guidance and direct intervention of the Holy Spirit it would be impossible to reach the fruits of eternal life.

A life of faith, love and an intimate relationship with our God is crucial in developing a work that requires the Fruits of the Spirit to have effective results. This Manual, which we place in your hands, is our contribution; your contribution is being available, guided and strengthened by God, the rest is up to the Holy Spirit.

***TO GOD BE THE GLORY FOR HIS POWER, LOVE
AND MERCY!***

Introduction

It is estimated that more than 500 million people in the world have some physical, mental or sensorial disorder and around 80% of this people live in developing countries.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 650 million people in the world, that is, around 10% of the entire global population suffers from some form of disability. 80% of people with disabilities, more than 400 million people, live in poor countries, which are the least prepared to attend to their needs.

Worldwide, people with disabilities continue to face serious obstacles and discriminatory practices as they try to contribute to society and in their daily lives. (United Nations Organization (UNO) in *The Treaty on the Rights of Disabled Closes the Gap in the Protection of Human Rights*, May 2008.

<http://www.un.org/spanish/disabilities/DisabilityConventionbackgrounder0508spanish.pdf>)

Some years ago, people with disabilities were seen as second class citizens, they lacked legal rights and were considered a “social burden”.

Resolutions coming from conventions, such as the Human Rights Declaration, People with disability Rights Declaration (<http://www.pdhre.org/rights/disabled-sp.html>), Salamanca’s Declaration (<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2005/10/15/españa/1129401213.html>), etc. have emphasized the value of people over their disability, so that government and society’s view of people with disabilities has been changed in a positive way.

Unfortunately these advances haven’t had the same impact on the evangelical church. Therefore, the presence of people with disabilities is not significant in the church.

It is the overall goal of this ministry, “The Gift of Love”, to open the doors of our churches to all people with disabilities and contribute to their development, especially through Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries. In addition, this ministry will help us as we take a tour through the Word of God and analyze from a Biblical perspective,

- The existence of people with disabilities
- Their role within the divine plan
- What we can do to ensure that they connect with Christ through the help of the church so that they can enjoy an abundant life here and then have eternal life in heaven without disabilities.

Vision, Mission and Strategy

Mission

To be a ministry that meets and develops people with disabilities, through the Word of God, in a loving and respectful environment, that practices human rights for individual and social welfare.

Vision

Sensitize and train the local church to evangelize and disciple people with disabilities.

Strategy: How we do what we do

We seek the support of the pastor to allow us to preach and teach from the Bible about God's concern for people with disabilities. In this way, the Holy Spirit can touch those who will serve as part of this ministry to form a team.

This team will be trained in teaching techniques so they will be able to start Bible classes in the appropriate Sunday school for people with different disabilities.

Note of Explanation

Normally the class can have the same topic and Bible reading, but it must be adapted to the needs of the students or the different ways they learn.

If the student is deaf - The teacher needs to prepare the class with a lot of visualizations; if it is possible, learn sign language, it's important.

For blindness - you will need tactile material, orientation, recordings, etc.

Boys and girls with intellectual disorders, Downs Syndrome (light or moderate), will need the teacher to develop a system of repetition; they may even use books for infants or pre-school children.

Boys and girls with Cerebral Palsy take longer to learn due to their difficulty with motor skills, their short attention spans and their physical limitations (they are often in wheel chairs). They require guidance to improve their self-esteem and emphasize that God loves them.

What the Bible Says

Old Testament

Since ancient times there have been references made to people with disabilities: *“The Lord said to him, ‘Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?’”* (Exodus 4:11 NIV).

This verse makes it clear that God himself is the creator of people with disabilities. They were on His mind, He had and He has specific plans for them. Since the beginning, they have had special protection, as it shows in the following verse:

“Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:14 NIV).

New Testament

People with disabilities are mentioned more in the New Testament. The following verse is one of the key verses to corroborate the existence of these people within the divine plan:

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” (John 9:1-3 NIV)

For men of Bible times it was necessary to see the signs and people with disabilities were crucial for this. The spiritual and physical health of these people served as support to prove Christ’s deity, as He himself said: *“So he replied to the messengers, ‘Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.’”* (Luke 7:22 NIV).

But Jesus was careful to make it clear that what was most important was the spiritual healing more than physical healing, it was done for the glory of God and not for men’s glory. The following Bible verse shows us this principle in the story about the paralytic in Mark 2:5, 11 when first He forgave the man’s sins: *“Son, your sins are forgiven”* and then He says: *“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home”*.

In this verse, Jesus encourages us to break all barriers that stop people with disabilities from getting to the feet of Jesus, look for different strategies to show them God’s love and His plan for eternity. It’s true that these people require a greater investment of time and material resources, but to Jesus this is an investment that will give eternal fruit.

“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:13-14 NIV)

Disabilities Today

The evolution of society has improved changes in attitudes that have enabled changes in the understanding of certain physical characteristics that previously were considered disabilities. In the 60's, for example, left-handed people were seen as people with an abnormality. In schools of the Western world, left-handed children were forced to write with their right hand and were punished if they didn't.

Later, in the 80's, this quality was accepted as just a difference, a physical characteristic. If certain tools, like scissors or corkscrews are created only for right-handed people, a left-handed person feels disabled: he or she is unable to perform certain actions and will need help from other people, losing their independence.

So, current society pays attention to the adaptation of the environment for people with disabilities to avoid their social exclusion.

Linguistically, in some places, terms such as "disabled", "blind", "deaf", etc., can be considered derogatory, because using these terms labels the person. In such cases, it is preferable to use forms like "people with a disability", "people with blindness", "people with deafness" or "people with reduced mobility".

As you read biographies about quadriplegic people like Joni Eareckson Tada or Ron Heagy, you learn that they must rely on others for doing even the most basic things, because they are confined to a wheel chair. Due to their physical state you might expect them to be bitter and resentful towards the people in their life, but because of they know the Lord Jesus Christ they have a totally different attitude. This people are showing us, by their attitudes, that they have realized the greatest miracle in their lives, that they can enjoy an abundant life in spite of their disability. They teach us that joy does not depend on physical healing, but on spiritual healing, and, if they, under such difficult conditions, can share the joy of living simply because Christ lives in their hearts, how can we not have the same joy in our less difficult situations?

Their lives are testimonies that God's power is made perfect in weakness, and thanks to this weakness God makes them strong in adversity and gives them joy in spite of their disability. There is no better example of God's power.

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV).

Causes of Disabilities

In addition to the main causes of disabilities (birth defects, chronic diseases, tumors and traffic accidents), many countries of the region also have other significant cases of disabilities related to infectious diseases, nutritional deficiencies and parasites as well as health problems related to fetal development and birth.

The main epidemiological factors for disabilities include: maternal infections during pregnancy, postnatal infections (meningitis, encephalitis and septicemia), birth trauma, incompatible blood types, intracranial hemorrhage, and hypoxia (lack of oxygen in the blood). In addition, thousands of people have suffered mutilations, which have resulted in musculoskeletal (bone & muscle) deficiencies, while others have psychological and emotional trauma as a result of armed conflicts.

General Principles about Complete Rehabilitation

Many mistakes are committed due to ignorance about what Complete Rehabilitation is and the correct terms for each one of its stages.

We must first mention that Habilitate and Rehabilitate are not the same thing:

Habilitate means to learn a skill that has never been acquired before. For example: a deaf person who learns to lip read, or a blind person who learns to read Braille, etc.

Rehabilitate means to relearn, by means of therapy, exercises, prosthesis, etc., abilities which people lost because of an accident or disease.

For Rehabilitation to be complete, the therapy must be not only to repair the physical injury, but to also prepare the person to be able to work and interact socially so they can integrate back into society as a productive person.

We will analyze below the process of the consequences of a disease that may place a person in a socially handicapped situation.

We'll start with a **disease or disorder** that, if not attended to adequately, will **generate**, as a consequence, a deficiency.

Consequences of Deficiencies

Deficiency refers to any loss or abnormality of an anatomical structure of a psychological or physiological function.

It is an abnormality in the structure and appearance of the body, in the functioning of an organ or system as a consequence of some cause.

The malfunction of an **organ or system will generate a disability.**

Disability

Disability is any restriction or lack of ability (due to a deficiency) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for humans.

Disabilities represent the consequences of deficiencies, from the point of view of functional performance and activity of the person.

(Example: a person with cerebral palsy has problems with movement control even though not all of the brain is damaged, it works in a different way and their activities are slow.)

The fact that someone cannot do something as the result of a **disability will generate** in that person a **handicap**, which will become readily apparent and restrictive in a bad social system, where architectural, educative, working and social barriers are not confronted.

It is up to us to eliminate this handicapped situation in people with disabilities by providing not only physical access but access to spiritual wealth and a dignified social life.

Handicap

Within the experience of health, handicap is a disadvantaged situation for a certain individual, as a result of a deficiency or disability. It limits or prevents the person from carrying out a role that is considered normal for that person (based on their age, gender and sociocultural factors).

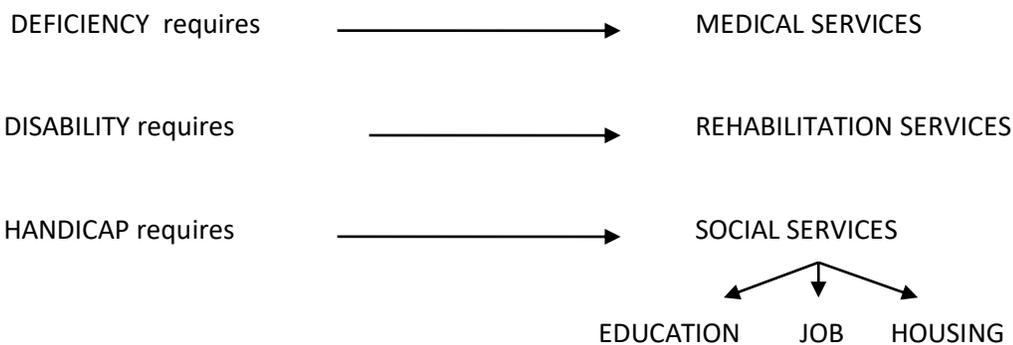
It is a disadvantage in relation to others. It occurs as a consequence of the deficiency and the disability. It is a disturbance in the area of relationship with other people (the level of social interaction).

Because of the previous information, it is clear we must not use the word **“disabled”**, because it can be offensive to people. We must use the phrase **“a person with a disability”** as it refers to a person rather than to their disability.

For a better understanding of the explained terms, let's see the chart below:

DEFICIENCY	Causes	DISABILITY	Generates	HANDICAP
-In Language -In the Ears -In the Eyes		-To Communicate -To Hear -To See		-Of orientation
- In Muscles and Bones		-To Groom Oneself -To Feed Oneself -To Be Mobile (walk)		-Of Independence -Of Physical Control -Of Mobility
- In the Mind (Psychological)		-In Behavior		-Of Social Integration

Needs depending on the level



The use of the term “disability”

The term “disability” is defined as: 1. “lack of adequate power, strength, and physical or mental ability; incapacity.” 2. “a physical or mental handicap, especially one that prevents a person from living a full, normal life or from holding a gainful job.” 3. “anything that disables or puts one at a disadvantage.” (Dictionary.com)

Realizing the great power of language to influence and create impressions, other terms that maybe common such as “incapacitated” or “handicapped”, show that people with disabilities are people “without ability” or that have “a disadvantage”. In comparison, “**disability**” means a lack of ability in a specific area.

The use of the term recognizes that all individuals with disabilities have much to contribute to our society.

Intellectual Disability

Intellectual disability is slow intellectual development. A person with mental deficiency is one that doesn't learn as quickly, and doesn't remember things as well as others at the same age and ability. According to the severity level of their problem, their relationships with other people and the ability to take care of themselves is affected. Mental deficiency is not curable, but all people can be helped to progress regardless of the severity level of their problem. The sooner special help or stimulation starts the more it may help their development.

The proposal by the American Association for Mental Deficiency classifies the mental delay in 5 groups, according to the intelligence quotient (IQ):

- On the Edge: —————→ 70-85
- Light: —————→ 55-70
- Moderated: —————→ 40-55
- Severe: —————→ 25-40
- Very severe: —————→ 25

But classifications must not be taken literally. There are no real boundaries for the appearance of normality or for genius. There are people with an IQ of 115 who are more efficient in life than others with an IQ of 150. Likewise, there are people with an IQ of 65 that are independent enough to have a job and may even start a family, while others with an IQ of 80 that fail to adjustment adequately.

What are people with mental deficiencies like?

They have greater difficulty learning to read, to write and especially learning mathematics. They are slow in developing habits of hygiene, in feeding themselves and getting dressed by themselves. They have difficulty getting along with other children and with people in general. They forget things easily.

One of the main objectives in the treatment of the mental deficiency patients, is to reach the optimal develop of their mental faculties; their individual interests must be taken into account, as well as their personal experiences and available resources. Another objective is to achieve social adaptation and the integration into normal life.

It is very important that patients with some degree of mental deficiency are able to receive special education, if it is possible beginning in childhood. The results of special education programs are spectacular, that's why they are also useful to those with severe mental deficiency. The prognosis for patients with a mental deficiency has more to do with the age of onset and the intensity of the treatment, personal motivation, education possibilities or medical and environmental conditions than with the degree of mental impairment.

With an early intervention program and the availability of a good support system, many patients with mental deficiency have become valuable members of society. This approach allows some patients to achieve independent living or to at least to be placed in a more protected environment. Even patients whose disability requires constant care benefit from rehabilitation and stimulation programs.

Downs Syndrome (DS)

Downs Syndrome or DS is a chromosomal abnormality, (Human genome, is the complete set of genetic information for humans. This information is encoded as DNA sequences within the 23 chromosome pairs in cell nuclei and in a small DNA molecule found within individual mitochondria. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_genome). This occurs at the moment of conception. The child with DS is clearly different from the rest of their peers, because while everyone has 46 chromosomes, they have 47, there is an extra chromosome in the 21st pair and this is what defines the DS or trisomy 21. It is a genetic accident that any baby can be exposed to during gestation no matter their race or social status.

The central nervous system of a baby at birth is not fully mature, it has malleability. This means, the brain has all the neurons the child will have during his life, but many connecting fibers are immature. This maturation is reached with age in normal conditions when the child is accepted and therefore stimulated. At birth a baby is genetically formed and now will depend on the amount of stimulation provided by the environment.

Intelligence is the ability to adapt to new situations, through assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the incorporation of experiences, facts and actions - games, imitation, etc.-. Accommodation is the change that comes from suffering through the existing experience to incorporate something new.

The child with DS will express this adaptability when the experiences he faces have meaning to him. This will be achieved when we give him real experiences, full of affection, and give him the opportunity to have these experiences constantly or at least on a consistent basis, to reinforce what he has assimilated.

This must continue until we can see that the wanted behavior has been accommodated in the child's mind. Then we can continue to the next level. With children that have DS we have to be very patient and repeat constantly what we want them to learn, but these repetitions must be full of affection. If our main desire for DS children is that they can learn or repeat something, we need to be willing to let God use us, we will need His love to love these special children. These children will become a blessing to us because we, the teachers, will learn many things from these children.

There are two sides to a coin and when we have it in our hands we can't remove one of the sides. Similarly, if we want to ensure that the children learn then we must remember: affection and intelligence are inseparable, for there to be an increase in one of these factors, it must be accompanied by the other and vice versa. If you want a DS child to learn, you must do all his exercises, all presentations and whatever you request with love. Without love he or she will not know God, because God is love. That's why we say:

THE GREATER THE AFFECTION-THE GREATER THE DEVELOPMENT

Cerebral Palsy and the Physically Limited

Cerebral Palsy is a term used to describe a group of chronic disorders that compromise the control of movement and that appear in the first years of life, but that is not progressive. The word cerebral refers to the location of the damage in either of the two hemispheres of the brain and palsy describes the disorder that compromises the control of body movement.

These disorders are not caused by problems in the muscles or the nerves; instead, the faulty development or damage is in the motor areas of the brain that disrupts the ability to adequately control movement and posture.

Also Cerebral Palsy is defined as the non-progressive disorder of movement or motor function due to a neurological injury that affects the normal brain development. It also produces sensory limitations, learning difficulties, behavior and emotional problems and intellectual delay. We can say that Cerebral Palsy is a disability that affects the movement and the body posture. It is caused by a defect or injury to an immature brain. Not all of the brain is damaged, only some areas, mainly those that control movement.

Once damaged, these parts of the brain do not recover, but they don't get worst either.

Characteristics of people with Cerebral Palsy

These disorder's manifestations have different aspects of varying severity. A child with Cerebral Palsy may have difficulties with fine motor skills, like writing and using scissors.

They may have difficulty maintaining balance and walking or may have involuntary hand movements.

The manifestations can vary from one person to another and may change over time.

A child with Cerebral Palsy requires more time to accomplish activities like coloring, painting, tracing a picture or taking notes, etc. due to their limited motor skills and attention difficulties.

Physically Limited

We will use the term physically limited to refer to people with motor disabilities due to a disease, an accident, or as the result of participating in an armed conflict. This people are limited in their normal physical movement so they need to use wheel chairs, crutches, prosthesis, etc.

Common Causes

Although there are people with these limitations as the result of Poliomyelitis or Polio (a group of diseases, acute or chronic, produced by the injury to the anterior or motor spars of the spinal cord. Its main symptoms are atrophy and paralysis in the muscles corresponding to the injuries in the spinal cord.) The fact that this disease has been eliminated in many countries decreases the number of people who may be limited by this disease. Instead, the main cause of motor disabilities is a result of widespread crime and violence, followed by car accidents, with a minor portion being sporting accidents, bad medical practices, etc. The loss of motor functions means that there is partial or total paralysis of certain extremities which may make the use of a wheel chair necessary.

People with injuries of the spinal cord are usually referred to using the term “paraplegic” if the lower extremities are affected and “quadriplegic” if all four extremities are affected.

Emotional State

Previously, most of these people had no problems with mobility so their lives were “normal”, and now life is presented in a different way. Architectural and social barriers isolate them and they are well aware of them. In this new situation, they have probably lost their job, their friends and maybe even a romantic relationship. For these reasons it is not uncommon for their emotional state to be affected and for them to have a low self-esteem.

Architectural barriers:

Cities are not made for people with physical limitations; just take a look at your surroundings and you will see how many barriers are there.

There are buildings with lots of stairs and no elevators, inadequate sanitary facilities, increasingly smaller houses, sidewalks without ramps and inaccessible public transportation. Sports complexes and amusement parks as well as many shopping centers were not designed with people in wheel chairs in mind. Our cities and communities segregate these people. In our context, churches and facilities in the church are also lacking the implements (ramps, elevators, etc) to help people in wheel chairs and those with limited mobility.

In countries like ours, with struggling economies, the fight for survival is getting harder. A person’s value is based on their productivity. Those who produce more have more and are valued more.

Here are some things we can do:

- Try to understand how people with disabilities feel.
- Emphasize that God loves them and the proof of that is that Christ came to die for them.
- God wants to change their lives of resentment into lives of love and joy.
- God can ensure them of an eternal life without disability and of an abundant life here on earth despite their disability.
- To demonstrate that in Christ we live a different life, the church must offer them “Christian love” and be willing to help them spiritually and physically.

Christ wants spiritual healing more than physical healing. The church must explain to them why and how this healing is available to them. In this way, the church becomes, for people with disabilities, a family that understands, supports and loves, which is what these people need and what we must be.

Autism

Autism is a disorder of the central nervous system characterized by problems with verbal communication, physical and psychomotor (movement or muscular activity associated with mental processes). It is a developmental disorder of the brain function that remains throughout life.

This syndrome becomes evident during the first 30 months of life and it leads to varying degrees of alterations of language and communication, social skills and imagination. Frequently, these symptoms are accompanied by abnormal behaviors such as repeated and stereotyped activities and interests, movements of balance and unusual obsessions toward certain objects or events.

People with classic autism show three types of symptoms: 1. limited social interaction, 2. problems with verbal and nonverbal communication and with imagination, and 3. limited or unusual activities and interests.

IMPACT

Autism affects approximately 1 in 1000 children and is more common in males than in females, at a ratio of 3 to 1, becoming one of the top mental disorders.

INDICATORS

The most notable feature of autism is limited social interaction. Children with autism may not respond to their names and they often avoid looking at people. These children often have difficulties interpreting the tone of voice and facial expressions and they do not respond to the emotions of others or watch other people's faces for signs of proper behavior. They seem to be unaware of other people's feelings toward them and the negative impact their behavior has on other people, this is more frequent in early childhood.

The educational environment must be structured so that the program is consistent and predictable. Students with autism learn better and get less confused when the information is presented both visually and verbally.

HOW TO HELP THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL

- Provide a structured environment that is familiar and uncomplicated, with people that understand their needs and possibilities.
- Advise the parents to assume an active role when a problem is recognized, they must visit a specialist and ask about it.
- Keep the family together, don't let the family nucleus break down, and try to keep the members of the family informed of the situation so they can help.
- Maintain a good sense of humor; this will help you move forward in the worst situations.
- Adopt safety measures for the future, remember that someday this child may not have one or both parents, leave this child with the best protection possible.
- Encourage the child, valuing every achievement, however small it may be.

Deafness

The Deaf Person's World

Even without being considered a linguistic minority, deafness has functioned as one in the USA where they have created and use just one sign language. However, in Latin America it's not the same; for example, in El Salvador they have an educational book with only 500 vocabulary words and they are not allowed to use American sign language. Therefore, we must recognize the existence of limitations regarding abstract concepts. This will make concepts like sin, salvation, redemption, heaven and hell not easily conveyed to the deaf person.

- ▶ We must understand that the source of information for deaf people is their eyes and that their visual angle is much more developed. Visualization will be an important tool in the education of people with deafness.
- ▶ Deaf people are taught social skills at home by their families and in their school environments. That is why, it is important to teach them at an early age about social, moral and spiritual behavior rules. (They should be taught these rules at the same age as children without disabilities are taught.)
- ▶ Don't forget that deaf people, in most of cases, are only deaf (they cannot hear). Their other senses, including their intelligence, are equal to or better than normal.

Complete/Total Integration

- ▶ To give deaf people an educational opportunity, and then close the door on opportunities; to give them voting rights but deny them the preparation and opportunities to be leaders; to give them the access to evangelical churches but not give them access to the wonders of a "new birth" is to give them only partial-integration.
- ▶ For true integration to be provided to the deaf population, they must be given the same opportunities that hearing people have to excel socially, economically, politically and spiritually.
- ▶ The deaf population, like any other population of people with disabilities, has traditionally been ostracized. For years they have been forgotten by society and it's logical to think that integration is not an easy task. However, integration is beneficial for the deaf population and for the population in general. All of humanity wins with integration.
- ▶ In a society where human value tends to disappear, overshadowed by economic value, integration is our attempt at resisting materialism, and defending our own humanity.
- ▶ We must remember that in most of cases, the deaf population has no other limitations apart from the difficulties of not hearing. Only in some cases, because of the lack of early stimulation and poor socialization can mental retardation develop. See chapter 12, How to Develop a Ministry in the Church for Deaf People.

Ministry for Deaf People in the Church

To develop a ministry of evangelism and discipleship dedicated to audio deficient and deaf people it is necessary to consider:

- That audio deficient and deaf people should be integrated into all activities in the church.
- That a team of interpreters must be trained so they can help audio deficient and deaf people feel welcome to get involved in all church activities.

- That to benefit integration it is necessary to make sure your people (teachers, leaders, etc.) know the sign language of the country where the ministry will be developed.
- That audio deficient and deaf people should participate in services supported by an interpreter. Afterwards, it is recommended that they attend a class (Sunday School) with the goal being to reaffirm the concepts expressed in the pastors sermon.

In many countries the deaf population does not know how to read or write, which hinders them not only in social and professional integration but also in Bible reading. This limits their spiritual growth, so it is important to implement a program that will teach them to read and write. This initiative, in addition to helping the deaf community, will serve as a point of entry into the church.

Blindness

Vision problems can vary from mild to very severe; people that absolutely cannot see anything are considered **blind**. However, some can distinguish between light and darkness, but cannot see the shapes of things. Others can see the shapes of large objects, but cannot see the details. All those who can at least see something are called **visually impaired**. Blind children, in most cases, are slower at learning to move from one place to another, they need help and additional stimulation. We can help blind child if we encourage him to explore their world and do things that other children normally do. Protect them from danger, but don't be overly protective. Remember, all children fall down when they are learning to walk, the same happens with a blind child.

Blind people like music a lot. A free workshop can be started to teach these people to play different instruments. It's possible that your local worship ministry will enjoy providing this service for the blind community. You can announce the workshop, indicating the date, time, location, etc... on secular and Christian radio, TV, Centers for the Blind, in schools for the blind, etc. Cassettes with a short message can be recorded, presenting Jesus as Lord and Savior, with musical background and an appropriate voice. Distribute these cassettes freely to blind people in public areas, at Centers for the Blind, etc. Don't forget to mention the date and time of church services and the church address. Friendships can be started by offering to read for blind people in public libraries and/or make up flyers in Braille and hand them out freely.

Following is a short story to think about:

The Blind Girl

What a blind world, mother! Men are blind! They think there is no other light than the sunlight. When I cross the streets, when I walk down the sidewalk, everybody sees me with compassion. I can hear men and women whispering: "Poor blind girl! Poor blind girl! She can't see the sunlight." Christ is my light and my day, whose brilliant glow doesn't go out in the darkest night. I can see the divine light and His eternal brilliance; my eyes, mother, are blind but my spirit can see. Maybe, that's why I don't feel hurt when they say "Poor blind girl! Poor blind girl! She can't see the sunlight." There are many who can see the blue sky, the white clouds, and the perfect waves of the sea; but their eyes cannot see the Lord who has all creation under his authority. I cannot see what they see; and they cannot see what I see. They see the light in the world and I see the light of God. Whenever they whisper "Poor blind girl!" I think, "Poor blind people! They cannot see any other light than the sunlight."

Take from: El Heraldo Del Pueblo (The People's Herald)

The **People's Herald** is a newspaper publication, whose main objective is to reach people with the Gospel . . . www.editorialperegrino.com/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabID...

Teachers Teaching People with Disabilities

A. The importance of the teacher

1. Their identity

- This is the person who, through the process of teaching-learning the Word of God, is used by God to produce changes in the lives of their students.
- This is the person who guides others to discover truth, so each student can surrender his or her life to Christ.
- This is the person who helps others to learn, guiding each student to study the Bible.
- This is the person who communicates life and not just knowledge. They focus on making disciples.

2. Their Importance

- They influence others through their words, deeds and personality. *“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”* Philippians 4:9 NIV. The teacher is molded through their experience with God.

3. Their Call

- The teacher must pray and ask God what His will is.
- The teacher’s confidence must be only in the Lord.
- The Lord is looking for people who are willing to serve Him.
- *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”* 2 Timothy 2:2 NIV

4. Their Job

- Pray that God will give you wisdom in class preparations and pray for the students. Study the material (Bible lessons, verses, songs, etc.) in advance. Apply the teachings first to your life, living the example of how the Word of God can transform. Teach/share what has been planned. *“For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”* Ezra 7:10 NIV
- To teach the Word of God so that each student recognizes their need for Christ, that each student learns to live a life of holiness, by faith, that they know to hold onto God’s promises and that they are able to serve Him. *“He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”* Colossians 1:28 NIV
- The greatest compliment that God can give us as His children is to place His word in our hands and call us “teacher”.

Conclusion

People with different types of disabilities are people created by God and no matter their disability they can grow and be fully developed in their faith in Christ. However, these people, who are part of a large and increasing population in our society, require some specialized and personalized attention.

We should be interested in reaching out to these people and their families with the Gospel of Christ, and then consciously guide them to know Jesus and follow in His footsteps together with others in our churches. If we raise awareness about the need for this ministry, God will call people from among us as teachers and leaders to minister to them. Then it will be our turn to train them for this necessary ministry.

But we need to know the general characteristics of the most common disabilities in our area. That is one of the gaps that this Manual has attempted to fill in a simple way by creating a hunger within us to want to do more research about current and growing issues related to the disabled.

All this knowledge, experience and vision for people with disabilities needs to spill out from our churches into an effective ministry for this significant population.

This ministry needs to be comprehensive, therefore, it should be directed towards children, youth and adults and must be included in our Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries, Compassion Ministries, Nazarene Youth International, Evangelism and other ministries.

Our hope is that this manual can facilitate this ministry, Gift of Love, in The Church of the Nazarene. We want specifically for this to be a means to reflect and share God's love with our brothers and sisters with disabilities. Also, we want to create the place for these precious members of the Body of Christ to be able to make a valuable contribution to the Kingdom and to the church.

Let's seize this opportunity and blessing to make Christ-like disciples of people with disabilities who are all around us! The Lord will help us throughout the process.

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- That are implementing this Project of “love and faith”
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“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
Luke 14:13-14 NIV

ANNEXS

Books:

“Los Minusválidos” CBP - 11069

Torres, Gabriel Barrera, (director) “Psychology” Bimonthly Publication, edition for Latin-American. Modern Graphic Arts, S.A.

Websites:

Las Discapacidades (Disabilities) www.libreopinion.com/.../lasdiscapacidades.html -

Todo sobre discapacidad (All about Disability) www.ladiscapacidad.com/ -

Discapacidades en la infancia (Disabilities in childhood)
paidos.rediris.es/genysi/recursos/doc/estadis/discapacidades.pdf

Juguetes para niños con Discapacidades (Toys for children with disabilities)

www.guiainfantil.com/educacion/discapacidad.htm

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GLORY TO GOD BECAUSE HE ALLOWS US TO SHARE IN A INTEGRAL WAY THE KNOWLEDGE HE GIVES US THROUGH HIS WISDOM AND TO BE USEFUL IN HIS WORK. TO ALL THE COLLABORATORS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Your sister in Jesus Christ,

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