



**AWARENESS OF SPECIAL NEEDS:
GOD DOES NOT MAKE MISTAKES
(Sermon)**

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Scripture

“Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love”
(1 Cor. 13:13, NLT).

Introduction

The title of this sermon is, “God Does Not Make Mistakes.” Do we believe that? I am sure that in our minds the answer would be absolutely, but what about our hearts? How deep does our faith go when trusting God? Whether they are good, bad, or things that we cannot understand?

Can it be that since the Lord knows the beginning from the end, could His wisdom be so much better than ours? The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:24, 25: “To those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (NRSV).

God calls us to salvation and gives us the power and wisdom to overcome and to live a life that replicates the life of His precious Son. This power is the same power that resurrected the holy Son of God. The crucifixion of Christ seemed like the plan of God had gone astray. But the resurrection of Christ put to shame the foolishness of the plans of Satan in the Cross of Christ. So we never know what God’s plans are and how they will work toward His plan of salvation. What we do know is God’s power and the strength as revealed in the Bible (see Job 38:8-29). What we don’t understand is how He uses that power and strength to accomplish His plans.

What does God’s plan have to do with individuals who have a disability? It is simple; it is a lesson for all of us about faith, hope and love. In the Bible, there is no distinction between individuals with disabilities and those that don’t have disabilities. The Lord refers to *all* people as His children. Therefore, from Genesis to Revelation, the assumption is that God accepted all individuals with and without disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are only disabled by the constraints that are put upon them by others, not so with Jesus.

Sermon

Individuals with disabilities and their families have so much to teach us about faith in God. First Corinthians 1:26-28 states: “You see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are” (NKJV).

In the early church most of the Christian converts were slaves and women. None of these early converts were without status in their society and far from successful by most standards. The

character and makeup of the church will remain consistent with God's "foolish" and "weak" mode of operation as revealed in the Cross of Christ. God created the world out of nothing; His new creation is no exception. God does not place value on the things on which we place value.

He loves us all and overlooks no one. Those who surrender to God no matter how weak they might be can be made strong by God. Individuals who have disabilities are not defined by their disability; they are defined by their faith in God. Individuals who have a disability have a child-like faith in God. If God said that it would happen then it will happen. They don't need to understand how or why; they just believe. They put into action the scriptures that talk about faith such as Luke 18: 16, 17: "Jesus called them to Him and said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it'" (NKJV).

Individuals with disabilities seem to have a simpler understanding of God and His power versus individuals. It is amazing how they embrace their disabilities, and through them God's love pours out from them to others who take the time to get to know them and appreciate what they have to offer others. The appreciation that individuals with disabilities have of the little things in life is amazing.

What individuals without disabilities take for granted is cherished by individuals with disabilities, whether it's access to a building, a friendly smile, or an acknowledgement that they too are children of God. Satan has hammered a wedge between those with disabilities and those without. Many individuals without special needs fear anyone who is different. The differences between individuals may be physical, emotional, or mental, but all may witness for God. Individuals with disabilities are witnesses for God every day in how they live with their disabilities. Differences are not always bad; differences broaden and challenge our perspectives as Christians.

Individuals with disabilities portray the hope in a risen Savior. Hope builds strong members. It gives them the empowerment to fulfill the commission Christ gave to each of us. People with disabilities live every day of their lives knowing firsthand the meaning of true hope, hope in a future without limitations. In the church, hope can be found in every corner of the congregation.

Hope is about empowerment. Can we challenge our disabled members to engage in a valuable ministry that will open doors for other disabled members or non-members? They trust scriptural statements that there will be no more death and sickness, where the lame will walk and the blind will see (Phil. 3:21; Isa. 11:6-9; Rev. 21:4). They take these Scriptures as a promise.

Somehow, individuals with disabilities tend to portray hope in their everyday lives. Hope springs from their enthusiasm and their continued courage as they face the obstacles of their disabilities. Many never complain concerning their challenges, instead concentrating on moving forward toward their goals. Their goals may be to learn, to communicate with others, or just to be accepted in spite of their disability. It may be a physical disability, which makes it hard to be mobile. What a witness they are to individuals without disabilities and what a story they have to share with others.

Remember, our most powerful witnessing tool is our daily lives—not our words. Maybe this is why students with disabilities are such strong witnesses, paired with a pure heart because they are not looking for any acknowledgement for what they do for the Lord. The hope portrayed by individuals with disabilities can make us wonder about the hope that is shown through us. Does our hope shine or is it dulled by the cares of this world?

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 15: 19: “If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied” (NRSV). Do we set our hope in the here and now or in what is to come? Do individuals see hope in the promises that we have claimed from the Lord revealed in our daily lives?

Individuals with disabilities portray strong unconditional love. They have an understanding of how important that type of love is to everyone. They are able to show genuine unconditional love, whether through a hug, a smile or words. Individuals with disabilities fulfill the gospel in loving others. Jesus said ““These things I command you, that you love one another”” (John 15:17, NKJV).

This is not difficult for an individual with a disability. In fact they portray what Scripture says: ““A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”” (John 13:35,NKJV).

Yes, individuals with disabilities are God’s disciples. They are a branch of the vine described in John 15:5, and they produce fruit within their families and outside of their families. A parent of a son who has a disability shared that he did not understand God’s unconditional love until he had his son; and what a blessing it has been to be his father and how his faith has grown since his son’s birth. (His son is now 18 years old). How many of us can say that we have impacted people with our unconditional love? Interestingly, the son has no idea of the impact that he has had on his father.

First Corinthians 13: 4-8 says, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away” (NIV).

This tells us that it is not intelligence or special talents that will last but love for one another that is what is truly important. Individuals with disabilities already know this even though they may not be able to repeat or read the scripture. It is shown in their daily lives. All of the Ten Commandments from the Lord can be recognized under these two important commands: love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.

Individuals with disabilities seem to follow both of these commands naturally. Maybe this is why people who know and interact with individuals who have a disability are blessed. Maybe in them we can have a small glimpse into how people will be loved in heaven.

“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:12, 13, NIV). Love is a quality that promotes community and freedom simultaneously. It is the fruit of the Spirit that centers on God rather than on us, because God is love. Maybe those with disabilities have recognized these verses better than most of us without disabilities?

Conclusion

What can we as a church do to share in the blessings that individuals with disabilities provide? Honor their commitment to the Lord. If they love the Lord and commit to the Lord and His teachings, can’t they be baptized too? How important it might be to hear their testimonies of what the Lord has done for them in their lives. Is it possible on a youth Sabbath or another

appropriate time to work with them to share their testimony from the pulpit? Are we tailoring our Sabbath schools to include individuals with disabilities (with appropriate activities and peer helpers)? Is the church accessible for individuals with physical disabilities? (Do we have wheelchair accessibility sanctuaries? Do we have hearing aids available and braille on our signs?) Can God's people be loving to those who are different? Can we support the caregivers and parents of those with disabilities?

If God does not make mistakes, then we are missing the true blessing that He has put in front of us in loving and accepting individuals with disabilities into our church families. Are we as a church missing an opportunity to learn from individuals with disabilities? Have we failed to acknowledge that they too are children of God? Are we missing the powerful witnessing that is portrayed by their lives and their experiences?

If the answer to these questions is no, then we have succeeded in having a church that is open and accepting of all individuals whom God created. If the answer is yes, then there is time to open our church doors to accept individuals with disabilities and their families.

If we closely review the Gospels, we will see that Jesus was surrounded by individuals who were different. Most of society did not consider normal the individuals Jesus taught and called to leadership.

In Matthew 10:1-4 Jesus lists His best friends—with the exception of one: “Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him” (NKJV).

There is the sword-carrying Peter, quick to cut off the servant's ear. Then you have the sons of Thunder, the two quick-tempered brothers. Thomas was the disciple who wouldn't believe anything unless he saw it. There was the common everyday terrorist Simon the Zealot. And there was Matthew, the tax collector, probably the most hated of the twelve.

These men were not only outsiders but a disgrace to the common church member. Either Jesus was totally inept or He knew that those less fortunate had value and a hope, faith, and love that only He could trust. Would we have selected these men to carry the Gospel to the then known world?

The individuals that surrounded Jesus had three characteristics that drew them to Jesus: faith, hope and love. They had faith in the Lord, hope in His salvation, and love for Him above all things. These are the same characteristics seen in individuals with disabilities, and if we watch very closely, we may just see the character of God revealed in amazing ways that will impact our lives.