

God's Church Includes Everybody

When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors. ... 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 14:12-14**

I would think that a great sign of God's approval and anointing on any church is to see it filled with people with all kinds of handicaps, whether deaf, blind, or in wheelchairs. The reason is because such people obviously feel welcome. The word gets out that this church wants—and needs—the disabled. They know they will be treated with dignity and respect. People everywhere want to spend time with them; they will come and talk to them!

Do you do that at your church? Or do you hurry to be with the people you already know? God wants His church to include everybody. It's not just pain, difficulty, or the inconvenience; the real problem is the way disabled people are marginalized and cast aside.

There is more than one kind of handicap, and there are obviously various degrees of being disabled. There are generally two kinds of disabled people: those who are born disabled and those whose handicap affects them later in life.

Others become disabled through illness. This can happen to any of us. It can happen through an accident, or it may be the gradual loss of our hearing or sight. The loss of the use of limbs can be anyone's experience.

But there is another kind of handicap, mental impairment, those born with mental limitations. It may be a low IQ or those born with Down's syndrome. There are those who have a

learning disability, such as dyslexia. Some lose the ability to think clearly. It may come from an accident, from an operation, or from senility—perhaps Alzheimer's disease.

Such people often love the Lord Jesus Christ with deepest devotion, but they wonder what's wrong with them. And yet God allows this because He has a purpose in it all. He loves us so much, and what is often seen as a negative in this life will be seen in the opposite way when we get to heaven.

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