





Ministering to Children Who Have Disabilities: Questions & Answers

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 **How should I respond to a child who has a disability? What can I do for a child with a disability that visits my class?**


 Be willing to look beyond the disability to the child within.

Don't be embarrassed to ask the parent about the disability. You need to build a relationship with the parent as well as with the child.

Treat the parent as an expert consultant. Find out what type of educational programming the child receives. What does the parent expect or desire for his or her child? What does the child want or need?


Pray for wisdom and understanding, seek advice, and ask the Lord to help you make the most of the opportunity.


 **Should children who have a mental disability be with other children their own age or with children at their level of understanding?**


 The children's ministry department will want to duplicate the type of learning experiences the child with a disability receives in school. What is working at school will be an indicator for us at church. What will we need to


add or modify to reach this child with a disability?

Most elementary children who are in public school will be very comfortable in class with children who have disabilities. Most will be in classes at school with children who deal with disabilities.


 **Should teens or adults with mental disabilities be allowed in the children's ministry settings?**


 Many adults or teens that deal with mental disability can benefit from children's ministry. However, they always need to be treated differently. Many could be used as "helpers" or "visiting friends." We must pay close attention and make sure we do not isolate them socially from their peers. We need to remember that church is far more than just learning.


 **Should children with disabilities be allowed to disrupt services that are intended for the rest of the children?**


 Some children with special needs can be disruptive. Learning about or understanding the nature of the disability and understanding what is the root cause of the

disturbance is essential. Some disruptive noise might be squeals of delight or worship unto the Lord. Other disturbances might be anger of defiant behavior that would need to be treated differently.

 **If a child with a disability is slowing down the rest of the class, should they be excluded from the class?**

 Any child (with or without a disability) who is impeding the progress of their class can easily be seen as a nuisance. Are you called to teach facts or called to teach students? A creative, flexible teacher with additional resources (teacher's aid, modified curriculum, additional training, etc.), using a multi-sensory approach to ministry should be able to accommodate students in his class.

 **How can I teach about divine healing if there are children in my class with disabilities? Should we pray for children who have disabilities to be healed?**

 If we pray for healing of a disability, and God doesn't heal the child, what do I tell the other children? How will they believe in healing

if it doesn't work? Here are some points to remember:

♥ God hears all prayers. He does not always give us what we ask for.

♥ God has made provision for people with disabilities— Luke 14:12-14 and 15-24.

♥ God created some people

with disabilities—Exodus 4:11.

♥ When we ask for a healing and we do not see it, we must seek God for wisdom and understanding. Healing has been promised to all; some will not experience that physical healing on earth, but will have to wait for the Resurrection.

Children without mental or physical disabilities can learn a lot from children who have disabilities. How often do we have an opportunity to show our kids unconditional love and acceptance?

Questions For Further Study—

1. What is your church currently doing to reach out to children with disabilities?

2. What *could* your church be doing to reach out to children with disabilities?

3. List some organizations in your community that could put you in touch with children with disabilities.