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Kirsty oversees the relationships Elevate has with Churches, making sure they are supported in their efforts of inclusion for people with disabilities in the church.

Resources:

Books

Beyond Suffering for the Next Generation (2015) and *Beyond Suffering: A Christian View on Disability Ministry* (2012), Joni Eareckson Tada & Steve Bundy, Joni And Friends

Disability and the Gospel, Michael S. Beates, Crossway, 2012

Same Lake Different Boat, Stephanie O. Hubach, P & R Publishing, 2006

Websites

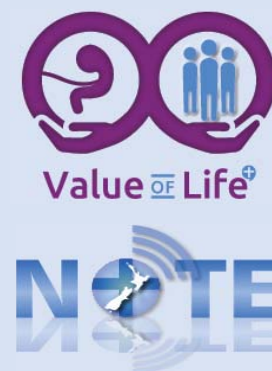
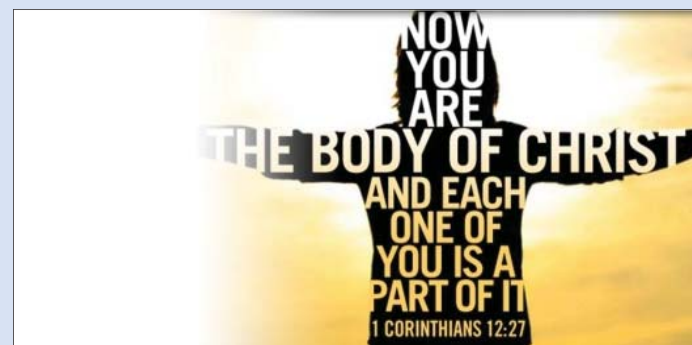
Elevate - Christian Disability Trust - www.elevatedcdt.org.nz

Joni and Friends - www.joniandfriends.org



Disability and the Church

New Zealand Christian Network - *Ka mahi tahi, ka ora*



Author Kirsty Anderson

Design Gayann Phillips

How well do we understand disability?

24% of people in NZ live with some form of disability. When you consider this number, there is little doubt that in most churches there are people who either have a disability themselves or have a family member with a disability.

What is disability?

Disability is a term used to cover a wide range of long-term impairments, physical limitations and restrictions. These impairments generally fit into the following categories:

- blind and low vision
- deaf and hard of hearing
- intellectual
- developmental
- physical
- mental health



What is it that we are focusing on?

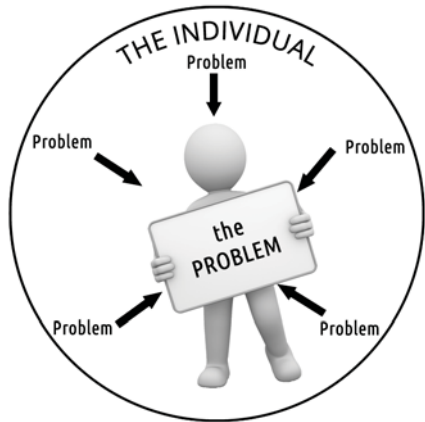
Is it the disability?

Or do we focus on what is eternal?

Ways to look at disability

There are two main 'models' used commonly to view and frame disability. The **medical model** views disability as an abnormality, with diagnosis and treatment focussed on defects and dysfunction. **The emphasis is to fix the abnormality or defect.**

The **social model** views disability as the result of barriers (attitudinal, physical and organisational), not a person's impairment. **The emphasis is on removing barriers.**



THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

Impairments and chronic illness often pose real difficulties but they are NOT the MAIN problems

TRADITIONAL VIEW

Disability is CAUSED by physical, mental, or sensory imparment.

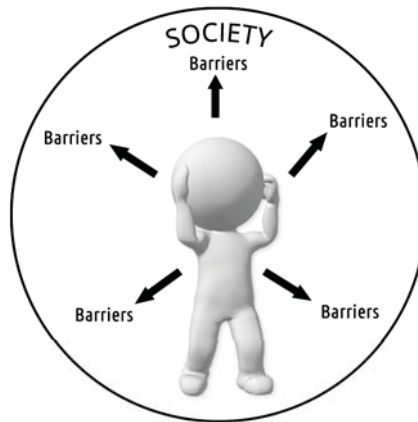
The INDIVIDUAL is impaired and is the problem.

Focus on the MEDICAL PROFESSION to 'cure' or alliviate the effects of the impairment.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

SOCIAL 'BARRIERS'

ENVIRONMENT	ATTITUDES	ORGANISATIONS
Inaccessible - buildings - services - language - communication	- prejudice - stereotyping - discrimination	Inflexible - procedures - practices



The various views and beliefs about disability within society have been shaped by history and by what society considers important. Who society recognizes and admires is an indicator of what is important and valued in that society. We see those who have accomplished much labelled successful, people whose actions or work contribute greatly to society are highly regarded, and those who are attractive or talented are admired.

From a biblical perspective, our value is because of who designed us and the price paid for us. We are all made in the image of God. All of us were 'knit together' and formed by God. (*Psalm 139:13*)

Jesus' death on a cross was the price paid for each of us, which includes people who experience disability. Our physical appearance, our intelligence, or what we have done, cannot lessen or add to our value.

Our society places great significance on independence and views those who rely on others, or need more support, as weak. In contrast, from a biblical perspective every person is dependent on God and this dependence is immense and endless.

God also made us to be interdependent, to do life together and to support each other. We are called the Body of Christ and no one part of a body can function on its own. It can only function as a part of the whole body, each part dependent to varying degrees on the rest.

God looks at the heart. Our appearance and our level of intelligence are not important to Him. In Proverbs we are told to trust God and not lean on our own understanding. In 1 Corinthians we are told that knowledge will pass away.

Why is there disability?

There are no easy answers and around certain aspects there are differing views. In saying this, there are some key truths. Disability can result from illness, disease, genetics, accidents or injuries. There has been degeneration of the gene pool since sin entered the world, so our physical bodies are not as perfect as Adam and Eve's. Sometimes, God allows people to have disability. Some people also assign responsibility to God for not only allowing but causing their disability.

- **Understand** first and foremost that a person is a person; they may also happen to have a disability but this is not who they are.
- **Become aware** of the beliefs and attitudes you have around disability.
- **Talk about the value of life** – how our value was determined by Christ's death and by being made in His image. As such, intelligence, appearance, independence and achievements do not determine our worth
- **Recognise** that disability affects the physical body and not the spirit; therefore disability does not hinder a person having a relationship with God.
- **Consider** the following passages: Exodus 4:10-12; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Luke 14 and 1 Corinthians 12.

