Sandra Peoples
equipping churches · encouraging families

God's Plan, Purpose, Provision, and Promise

A biblical foundation for welcoming people with disabilities and their families into the life of the church.

THE FOUNDATION

Every person bears the image of God

Our theology of disability begins where our theology of humanity begins: at creation (Gen. 1:26–27). The fall distorts how we reflect God, but His image remains in every person. That image is not measured by ability, intelligence, or productivity. We do not only image God; we **are** the image of God. It is about who we are, not just what we do.

> *We may affirm that each person has the capacity for a relationship with God because we believe God has the capacity to reach every human spirit.*
>
> JOHN HAMMETT

01 God's Plan

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

PSALM 139:13–14

Some disabilities are written into a person's DNA; others appear over time or through injury or illness. Whenever a diagnosis comes, it is under God's sovereign plan, for that person's good and His glory.

02 God's Purpose

"Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

EXODUS 4:11

Disability is not a sign of sin, faithlessness, or a mistake on God's part. Jesus said the man born blind was not being punished, "but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).

03 God's Provision

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

King David welcomed Mephibosheth, lame in both feet, to a lasting seat at his table (2 Sam. 9). Disability has functional aspects, such as what a body or mind can do, and social aspects, such as the barriers others put in place. A biblical worldview addresses both. God's grace meets us in our weakness, and His church can work to remove the barriers that keep people from the table.

04 God's Promise

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore."

REVELATION 21:4

One day, everything that hinders our fellowship with one another and our worship of God will pass away, and we will all be made like Christ (1 Cor. 15:49–51).

What this means for your church

Plan

See every person as an image bearer with the potential for a relationship with God.

Purpose

Reject the idea that disability is punishment, and watch for God's works on display.

Provision

Identify and remove the barriers that keep people with disabilities from worship, fellowship, discipleship, and service.

Promise

Point families to the hope of the day when every tear is wiped away.

Seeing all people as image bearers is the reason we do disability ministry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sandra Peoples, PhD, is the disability ministry consultant for the SBTC, an adjunct professor at SWBTS, and the author of *Accessible Church*. For more resources, visit sandrapeoples.com.