



**HIDDEN
GIFTS**
MINISTRY

DISABILITY MINISTRY **Starter Packet**

A Biblical and Practical Guide for Churches

A warm, practical resource to help churches take faithful first steps toward welcoming and including individuals with disabilities and their families.

WELCOME LETTER

Dear Church Leaders and Ministry Teams,

Thank you for your desire to more fully reflect the heart of Christ by welcoming and including individuals with disabilities and their families. We are encouraged by your willingness to explore disability ministry and to take intentional steps toward building a church culture where every person is known, valued, and able to participate in the life of the body of Christ.

At Hidden Gifts Ministry, we believe disability ministry is not simply a program - it is an expression of the gospel. Scripture reminds us that every individual is created in the image of God and has a vital role within the Church. When churches intentionally include people with disabilities, they bear witness to the Kingdom of God and extend Christ's invitation of belonging to families who are often underserved or overlooked.

In partnership with Highlands Church, this packet was created to serve as a practical and encouraging guide as you begin or strengthen disability ministry within your church. It brings together biblical foundations, practical steps, assessment tools, and ministry resources designed to help you start thoughtfully, prayerfully, and sustainably. Our hope is not to overwhelm you, but to reassure you that meaningful inclusion is possible - one faithful step at a time.

The resources in this packet reflect both the ministry experience of Highlands Church and the mission of Hidden Gifts Ministry to encourage, equip, and support churches as they welcome individuals and families affected by disability.

Please know that you are not alone in this journey. We are grateful for the opportunity to share what has been learned and would be honored to walk alongside you as you discern how God is calling your church to serve individuals with disabilities and their families.

May the Lord bless your church as you seek to create spaces where His love is made visible, every person recognizes the gifts God has given them, and His house is filled.

With gratitude and prayer,

Hidden Gifts Ministry
In Partnership with Highlands Church



Including People with Disabilities Is Biblical

The Church is called to reflect the heart of God by welcoming and valuing every person He has created. Individuals with disabilities are not an afterthought in the Kingdom of God; they are essential members of the body of Christ, created to glorify God and to be known, loved, and included in the life of the Church.

The Luke 14 Mandate

Jesus paints a picture of a great banquet where those often overlooked—the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—are intentionally invited so that the house may be filled. Disability ministry is a response of obedience to Christ's call to radical hospitality and intentional inclusion.

Luke 14:15-24

15 When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" 16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' 19 And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' 20 And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' 22 And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23 And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

Why Disability Ministry Matters

- Allows individuals with disabilities to worship, serve, and glorify God
 - Enables families to participate fully in church life
 - Creates opportunities to reach new families in the community
 - Strengthens the church by honoring every member of the body
- 1 Corinthians 12:22–23

Practical Steps to Starting a Disability Ministry

Each step below is grounded in Scripture, reminding us that disability ministry flows from obedience to Christ, dependence on God, and love for His people.

1. Begin with Prayer

Before any plans are made, begin by seeking the Lord in prayer. Ministry rooted in prayer acknowledges our dependence on God and invites His wisdom and direction.

Philippians 4:6 — "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

James 1:5 — "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God... and it will be given to him."

Pray for unity among leadership, clarity of vision, provision of volunteers, and sensitivity to the needs of individuals and families.

2. Engage Church Leadership

Disability ministry flourishes when it is supported and championed by church leadership. Scripture calls leaders to shepherd the whole flock and to care for those who may be overlooked.

1 Peter 5:2 — “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you...”

Proverbs 11:14 — “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.”

Meet with senior leadership to share vision, discuss ownership, and ensure the ministry aligns with the church’s mission. Including testimony from families affected by disability can help leadership understand both the need and the opportunity.

3. Form a Ministry Committee

God often works through the collective wisdom of His people. A diverse committee brings prayer, perspective, and shared responsibility.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 — “Two are better than one... For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”

Romans 12:4–5 — “For as in one body we have many members... so we, though many, are one body in Christ.”

Suggested members include a pastor, a professional, parents, and when possible, a person with a disability. Together, the committee can research models, visit other ministries, and prayerfully discern next steps.

4. Communicate with the Church

Sharing the vision with the congregation invites the whole church to participate in God’s work. Clear communication builds unity, compassion, and volunteer support.

Ephesians 4:16 — “When each part is working properly, [the body] makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Matthew 9:37–38 — “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...”

Announce the ministry, invite prayer, and encourage members to consider how God may be calling them to serve.

5. Starting Small and Growing Well

Begin with one identified need and grow intentionally as God provides resources and people.

Luke 16:10 — “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much.”

Colossians 3:23 — “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.”

Possible starting points include: - Sunday morning children’s class - Sunday morning adult class - Respite nights - Parent or caregiver support groups

6. Creating a Sensory-Friendly Classroom

A sensory-friendly classroom supports self-regulation, reduces overstimulation, and communicates welcome.

1 Corinthians 14:40 — “But all things should be done decently and in order.”

Philippians 4:7 — “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Key elements may include: - Soft or natural lighting - Reduced visual clutter - Defined spaces for learning, calming, and sensory engagement - Visual schedules and communication supports - Flexible seating and movement opportunities

A sensory-friendly environment communicates welcome before a word is ever spoken.

Identifying Needs in Your Church and Community

Understanding the needs within your congregation and community helps ensure your ministry begins sustainably and compassionately. The following survey can be distributed to members to assess current needs, potential volunteers, and areas where support is most needed.

Church Disability Survey

1. Does a member of your family have a disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you have a friend or neighbor with a disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. What is the disability of your family member or friend? _____
4. What is the age of your family member or friend? _____
5. Does he/she attend church regularly? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. If not, would they like to? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure
7. If they would like to attend church, what changes (if any) should be made? ☐ Parking ☐ Accessibility ☐ Large Print Bibles ☐ Better Sound Equipment ☐ Better Lighting ☐ Wheelchair space ☐ Special class ☐ Childcare support ☐ Other: ____
8. Does your friend/relative have additional needs?
☐ Weekly shopping assistance ☐ In-home ministry ☐ Respite care ☐ Support group
☐ Other: _____
9. We are interested in starting a disability ministry.
Would you like to be involved? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe / More info
10. Volunteer Interest: ☐ I want to serve in the disability ministry ☐ I have no experience but want to help ☐ I have prior experience (please explain): _____

Name and Phone Number: _____

Student Intake Form

(To be completed by parents or caregivers)

Student Name: _____

Parent / Guardian Name: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Diagnosis / Medical Condition(s): _____

Seizures: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

Allergies / Sensitivities: _____

Mode of Communication: _____

Behaviors / Areas Needing Assistance: _____

Bathrooming Needs: _____

What helps calm the student: _____

Likes: _____

Dislikes: _____

Emergency Concerns / When to Call Parent:

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Contact Information

If you have questions, would like additional resources, or would like to talk through next steps for beginning or strengthening a disability ministry at your church, we would be honored to connect with you.

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We welcome the opportunity to pray with you, answer questions, and walk alongside your church as you seek to create a more inclusive and welcoming ministry.

Scripture Index / Quick Reference

- Philippians 4:6 — Prayer for guidance
- James 1:5 — Wisdom from God
- 1 Peter 5:2 — Shepherding the flock
- Proverbs 11:14 — Value of counsel
- Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 — Strength in partnership
- Romans 12:4–5 — Unity of the body
- Ephesians 4:16 — Working together to build up the church
- Matthew 9:37–38 — Prayer for laborers
- Luke 16:10 — Faithfulness in small beginnings
- Colossians 3:23 — Working wholeheartedly for the Lord
- 1 Corinthians 14:40 — Orderly ministry
- Philippians 4:7 — Peace of God guarding hearts

Additional Resources:

Websites/Organizations:

Joni and Friends: www.joniandfriends.org
Friendship Ministry: <http://friendship.org>
Key Ministry: www.keyministry.org
Hidden Gifts Ministry: www.hiddengiftsministry.org

Books:

Special Needs Smart Pages- Joni and Friends
Special Needs, Special Ministry- Jim Pierson
Exceptional Children- Jim Pierson
Leading a Special Needs Ministry- Amy Fenton Lee

Online Training

Beyond Suffering, Joni and Friends

Curriculum

Access - www.lifeway.com
Friendship - www.friendship.org
Hands On Curriculum - www.group.com

For more information visit our website:

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