

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS  
SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Dee Emmert \*

Bishop, Marilyn E., ed. Religion and Disability: Essays in Scripture, Theology and Ethics. Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1995.

This book focuses on disability and the Bible, theological reflections on disability, and the church and mentally handicapped persons. The author calls on the church to be imaginative in its approach to people with disabilities. "The challenge for the church ultimately is not so much to learn how to minister to disabled people but to be open to being ministered to and, ultimately, healed by them." 64 pages.

Bittner, Robert. Under His Wings: Meeting the Spiritual needs of the Mentally Disabled. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994.

This book comes from the personal perspective of the author as the younger brother of a "mentally handicapped sister." He speaks primarily to congregations, encouraging us to "open our hearts and minds." He gives basic statistics regarding mental disabilities and a brief history of our society's response. He discusses the spiritual needs of individuals and gives specific suggestions for making our teaching effective. He continues with suggestions for building an intentional outreach to individuals who are mentally handicapped. One chapter focuses specifically on the challenges of outreach. Finally, he shares his personal experience and closes with an extensive annotated bibliography. Believable anecdotes are used throughout. 185 pages.

Bogardus, LaDonna. Christian Education for Retarded Persons. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969.

This book deals with "mildly and moderately retarded persons, and a wide age range which includes children and youth." Chapters discuss understanding persons who are retarded, their Christian growth, facts about retardation, providing groups for retarded persons, learning characteristics, ways of teaching (including music, stories, trips, art, puppets, games, eating, and using the Bible), using curriculum materials, and the needs of the teacher. Contains a short annotated bibliography. 112 pages.

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Cherne, Jacquelyn. The Learning Disabled Child in Your Church School. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1983.

This short book describes typical symptoms of children with learning disabilities and the personality styles they often develop. It provides simple, direct advice for dealing with problem behaviors as well as suggestions for advocating for the child in the congregation. The final chapter provides a list of inexpensive resources for a church library. Brief bibliography. 48 pages.

Clark, Dorothy, Jane Dahl, and Lois Gonzenbach. Teach Me, Please Teach Me. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1974.

"A complete guide for teaching the retarded. Twelve lessons plus enrichment suggestions for follow-up sessions." Lesson topics include accepting ourselves, our usefulness, our need for God, faith, real and pretend, a good foundation, what is prayer?, in time of trouble, and storms of life. Also includes a short bibliography and lesson outlines. 142 pages.

Eiesland, Nancy L. The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994.

The author "writes out of her own experience of lifelong disability." She describes the life stories of two women with disabilities, one who was born "without lower limbs and with above-elbow upper extremity stumps"; the other was "diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at age twenty-nine." She uses the word "bodies" as a centralizing theme to talk about physical bodies as well as social bodies. She discusses disempowering theologies and goes on to discuss Jesus as "the disabled God" and to draw liberation and strength from that image. Finally, she discusses the Eucharist as "a ritual of exclusion and degradation" for people with disabilities and proposes a liturgy that includes and honors people with disabilities. Contains a selected bibliography and extensive index. 136 pages.

Estes, D. Timothy. A Humanizing Ministry: A New Direction for Ministry with Persons Who Are Mentally Retarded. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984.

This book focuses primarily on the response of the congregation rather than on the individual with disabilities. Chapters focus on a "humanizing theology," the character of the church, the task of the church, the caring community, and principles for a humanizing theology. It focuses on the need of the congregation to serve as an advocate for people with disabilities and the need to change dehumanizing aspects of our society. Includes a list of

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organizations that can offer additional material, a sample retreat for the congregation, and an annotated bibliography. 142 pages.

Furst, Lyndon G. "What Christian Schools Can Learn from the Court: The Case of Special Education." Christian Education Journal 15 No 2 (Winter 1995): 88-93.

This article discusses the Oberti case where a child with learning disabilities was placed in a regular classroom in response to his parents' lawsuit. The article suggests that similar principles should be applied to Christian education. Issues regarding training of teachers and available materials are also discussed.

Goddard, Alice L. "Action on Many Fronts." International Journal of Religious Education 38 (February 1962): 22, 27.

This article summarizes efforts by the National Council of Churches and denominations to address Christian education for persons with special needs. This article is part of an issue focused on "The Church's Ministry and Persons with Special Needs."

Hawley, Gloria H. *How to Teach the Mentally Retarded—There's a Way to Reach Them*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1978.

This book has chapters focusing on the child, the parents, the home, the teacher, the class, and the church. Each chapter is short, focusing on brief anecdotes, simple and direct suggestions, and an emphasis on love and acceptance. A short reading list completes the book. 48 pages.

Lund, Florence A., ed. Adventures in Christian Living and Learning: A Resource Book for Use with Retarded Persons: Part I—Ages 11-15. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969.

This book is part of "a series of curriculum resources prepared for use with children and youth who are severely or moderately retarded (sometimes referred to as 'trainable')." It includes themes and lesson suggestions for "God's Plan for Me", "God's Good Plan", "My Church and I", and "Merry Christmas." It includes an introduction for the teacher and an appendix containing recipes, a materials and supplies list, music, and a resource bibliography. 127 pages.

Malone, Antonia. Spreading Light: Religious Education for Special Children. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.

This book is divided into three parts: Principles of Methodology, Principles of Programming, and Appendices. In principles of methodology, the author discusses the purpose of religious education for special children and focuses on preparing the community to accept the individual. In principles of programming, issues such as class structure, preparing a lesson plan, and preparing a liturgy are discussed. The appendices include an annotated bibliography of resources, sample lesson plans, sample liturgies, and suggestions for workshops. 124 pages.

Neufeldt, Aldred H., ed. Celebrating Differences. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1984.

This book deals primarily with developmental disabilities. It is a collection of articles by different authors. It lays a theological foundation for ministry to people with disabilities, discusses ways to celebrate differences, gives a history of approaches to people with developmental disabilities, discusses the impact on the family, faith development, worship, and life planning. 150 pages.

Newman, Gene, and Joni Eareckson Tada. All God's Children. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993.

This book deals with the role of the pastor and of the volunteer in terms of spiritual gifts. It has separate chapters on mental retardation, deafness, physical disabilities, visual impairments, and learning disabilities. Addresses disabilities from the positive standpoint that people with disabilities can provide ministry in spite of, and perhaps because of, their special needs. Gives basic information such as a definition of each disability, causes, classifications, misconceptions, models for ministry, special considerations, and additional resources. The final chapter provides suggestions for selecting a population and providing a ministry to that group of people. 123 pages.

Montanus, Ralph, with Harold Hostetler. That They Might See. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.

The blind author, addressing ministry with the blind, notes "because of their handicap, they seem to be more open to the gospel than many other people are." He tells much of his life history, including how he came to produce a radio evangelism program targeted to the blind. He concludes the book with helpful suggestions for ministering to blind people. 120 pages.

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Palmer, Charles E. "They Need a Chance to Grow." International Journal of Religious Education 38 (February 1962): 10-11.

This article discusses the decision to include someone with special needs in a regular group or special group, special transportation and camping needs, and the responsibility of each person to respond to the person's needs. This article is part of an issue focused on "The Church's Ministry and Persons with Special Needs."

Pierson, Jim and Robert E. Korth, eds. Reaching Out to Special People: A Resource for Ministry with Persons who Have Disabilities. Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1989.

This book contains a selection of seventeen chapters grouped together under the headings "Persons with Mental Retardation", "Persons with Other Disabilities", and "Building a Caring Ministry." The authors include pastors, directors of services that deal with ministry to people with disabilities, education professors, specialists, and family members. Topics include learning styles and classroom management, ministry with persons who have a variety of impairments (mobility, hearing, visual, learning styles and behavior disorders), accessibility, camping, music, and dealing with families. There are lesson plans for a year focusing on God, Jesus, people of faith, and the church. The plans include a purpose, scripture, songs, a brief summary of the lesson, application, activity, and emphasis verse. A resource section includes addresses and telephone numbers for a variety of secular and religious organizations who can provide additional assistance and information. Finally, an evaluation for determining the knowledge of students with trainable mental retardation and an extensive index are included. 312 pages.

Ratcliff, Donald. "Ministering to the Retarded." Christian Education Journal 6 No 1 (1985): 24-30.

This article summarizes "characteristics of the retarded person" such as development of rapport and maladaptive behaviors. He then discusses implications for the teaching methodology and a theological rationale for reaching out to the retarded. He suggests three contexts for working with the retarded: separate classes, visitation at their residence or foster parenting and rejects mainstreaming.

Roorbach, Rosemary K., ed. Discovery: A Resource for Use with Persons Who Have Learning Difficulties: Part I, Ages 7-12. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1971.

Resource book for Christian education containing three units on: I am Important, Rules and Choices, and Come, Make a Joyful Noise. Each unit includes a number of themes and sub-themes with a purpose, scripture verse, and suggested activities. Each unit also contains introductory information and additional resources such as records and filmstrips, which support the themes. The appendix contains suggestions for enrichment activities, such as creative arts and field trips, and appropriate songs. 122 pages. Companion books for the pupil are also available.

Rolfsrud, Erling Nicolai. One to One: Communicating the Gospel to the Deaf and the Blind. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.

This book is written in a "popular" style to be accessible to both lay people and clergy. It contains tips for interacting with deaf or blind people within a story structure. It also summarizes the history of ministry with people with these two handicaps, focussing especially on Ephphatha Missions. The appendix includes sources of information about the blind and the deaf as well as sources for reading material for the blind. 116 pages.

Russo, C.Ss.R., Rev. Anthony. The God of the Deaf Adolescent: An Inside View. New York: Paulist Press, 1975.

This book presents the results of a research study in which 140 deaf adolescents were interviewed to determine their understanding of a variety of theological questions. It concludes with some recommendations for teaching theological concepts to deaf adolescents. The book contains the interview form used, the percent giving each response to each question by religious background, and a discussion of the impact of language deficiency on education. It concludes with four pages of cited or consulted sources and a helpful index. 278 pages.

Sampley, Deann with foreword by Joni Eareckson Tada. A Guide to Deaf Ministry: Let's Sign Worthy of the Lord. Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1990.

This book opens with chapters defining deafness and describing the deaf community. It goes on to address concerns of a hearing person contemplating ministry with the deaf, primarily as an interpreter within a

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hearing community. This includes a discussion of word order in American Sign Language. A number of useful conversational signs are illustrated. Finally, there is a section discussing churches specifically oriented to the deaf rather than interpreting what happens in a hearing congregation. The book concludes with resource information, a bibliography and an index of signs. 155 pages.

Schuster, Clara Shaw, ed. Jesus Loves Me, Too: The Church Ministering to Exceptional Persons. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985.

This book contains chapters discussing such topics as the church response, adaptations for needs, finding resources, supporting the family, behavior management, and specific issues related to learning disabilities, mental retardation, gifted/talented, communication disorders, physical disabilities, and special health problems. Most chapters conclude with suggestions for community resources and additional reading. 144 pages.

Sutton, Joe P., Connie J. Sutton, E. Gail Everett. "Special Education in Christian/Fundamentalist Schools: A Commitment to All the Children?" Journal of Research on Christian Education 2 No. 1 (Spring 1993): 65-79.

This article reports the results of a study of the "number of Christian/fundamentalist schools nationwide offering special education." Of the schools sampled, only 5.75% offered special education programs, mostly for students with learning difficulties. The majority of the teachers had not been trained in special education. A discussion of the causes of such low representation followed.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett. God Plays Piano, Too: The Spiritual Lives of Disabled Children. New York: Crossroad, 1993.

This book takes an experiential approach with many anecdotes. Chapters include "Listen and Learn from Narratives that Tell a Story", "Opening Windows", "The Prophetic Voice of Parents with Disabled Children", "Welcoming Unexpected Guests to the Banquet", and "The Religious Narratives of Disabled Adolescents." In the preface, the author states "These life-changing experiences [with people with disabilities]...have continued to push me to look and listen for, and expect to find, the surprising presence of the Holy in the lives of people whom society has deemed 'disabled,' and therefore unable to live in Christ." An encouraging and thought-provoking book for people who

are considering ministries with people who have disabilities. 200 pages.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett. "Pilgrims Lost in an Alien Land." Theology Today 49 (October 1992): 311-319.

In this article, the author discusses his work with three teens with behavioral disorders. He describes interactions he has with each youth. The author notes that each child is asking God "to help make sense of the world that is often more chaos than cosmos, more helter-skelter than controlled and predictable...These young people are singing songs of lament to God as pilgrims lost in an alien land." He calls us to be co-pilgrims with these young people.

Webb-Mitchell, Brett. Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities into the Church. New York: Crossroad, 1994.

A sequel to *God Plays Piano, Too*. Discusses issues such as labeling, a theological reflection on people with disabilities, becoming a welcoming church, Christian Religious Education and celebrating expected guests (being inclusive). While still containing many anecdotes, this book is less experiential and more academically oriented than the former. 194 pages.

Wink, Walter. "'Normalcy' as Disease: Facing Disabilities." *Church and Society* 85 (May/June 1995): 10-17.

Discusses the concept of normalcy and its origin in three sources: "Hebraic sacrificial practice, Christian perfectionism, and the secular perfectionism of the Enlightenment." Concludes with the notion that the world is made of two groups "those who are aware of their disabilities and those who are blind to them."

Wirths, Claudine G. "Religious Education for the Educationally Disabled." *Christian Ministry* 16 No 4 (July 1985): 17-19.

This article summarizes physical concerns, attitudinal needs, specific needs, and teaching materials. Suggestions, such as materials that have the same page numbers but simplified concepts, are discussed as well as the use of other media. Suggestions for initiating a ministry targeted to specific populations are also included.



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Wood, Andrew H., with E. Ellen Glanville and LaVerne A. Weber. Unto the Least of These: Special Education in the Church. Schamburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1984.

This book contains sections on "Mental Retardation—What is it All About?", "Our Responsibility to the Mentally Retarded", "Organizing a Church Program for the Mentally Retarded", and "Principles of Working with the Mentally Retarded." Topics include general guidelines, recruiting and training workers, beginning a worship program, curriculum planning, using interest centers, music, prayer, scripture, evangelizing, and discipline. Appendices include sample schedules, a curriculum, a pre-placement evaluation, a form for an individual prescriptive teaching plan, and additional resources. 143 pages.

Yount, William R. Be Opened! An Introduction to Ministry with the Deaf. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1976.

This book is designed for the seminary student who intends to minister to the deaf. The author "served as director of deaf program services" in Virginia while his wife worked at Gallaudet. Subsequently, he served as minister to the deaf for a Texas congregation. He discusses the psychology, sociology, and education of deaf people. Then, he moves on to discussing the development and administration of a deaf ministry including specific suggestions for working with a deaf council. Finally, he discusses teaching and training issues and resources within the Southern Baptist Convention. A topical bibliography completes the book. 226 pages.