

Disability Empowerment & Serving the Church

Everyone deserves to have a chance for their gifts to shine at church, but sometimes people with disabilities face hidden obstacles when it come to serving. Today, we are going to look at four common barriers that people with disabilities face and learn how to knock them down.

Four Barriers To Serving

1. Asking - Sometimes people with disabilities do not serve at church because no one has asked them about serving. This can happen when leaders make assumptions about what someone can or cannot do. This hurts everyone. The best way to solve this is to not make assumptions and get to know people instead. The other reason people with disabilities aren't always approached about serving is that sometimes leaders are afraid that they may make a mistake when discussing disability. A great way to handle this is to learn more about Disability Etiquette by checking out helpful resources, like Ability Ministry's Disability Etiquette Guide. And remember, if you make a mistake, it's OK, learn from it and keep moving forward.

2. Communication - Some people with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have a more challenging time communicating how they would like to serve. Using communication tools, like Charting the LifeCourse One Page Person Centered Description can help. Also, it can be help to observe the person and notice what they are doing when they shine.

3. Transportation- Some people with disabilities are not able to drive. If you suspect this is a barrier to serving, find out more. Then check out community services or invite other church members to help drive them to church.

4. Opportunities - When serving opportunities are too rigid, this can be a barrier too. So be willing to make adaptations. Create new positions if needed, break down tasks into small steps, or invite a buddy or mentor to assist the individual. Small adaptations can make a big impact. And remember, sometimes what needs to be adapted the most, is a leader's perspective. So, even if a person serves differently than others on the team, remember that all variations of serving are pleasing to God, so they should be pleasing to us too!

One More Thing - A really important place for people with disabilities to serve at church is in leadership. Because when we serve together and learn from each other, we can create churches where everyone has a chance to shine!