



Disability Inclusion Discipleship Study

Introduction

This discipleship study on the story of David and Mephibosheth from 2 Samuel 9 provides an opportunity to explore a scriptural understanding of God's heart for disability inclusion.

As you engage with this discussion, keep in mind that there are a wide range of references in Scripture to people with disability and even more references to disability in metaphor. Not all are affirming. Treating these biblical texts as literal and normative for all time has led to mixed attitudes throughout the history of the church towards people with disabilities.

Study Outline

Icebreaker

Invite attendees to briefly share their understanding and experiences alongside people with disability.

Introduce the Story of David & Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9

The passage we are going to read is from the Old Testament and takes place during the reign of King David over Israel. David has recently become King (2 Samuel 5) and wants to honour the household of his friend Jonathan, so he enquires if there is anyone left from Saul's family that he could show kindness to. David is led to Mephibosheth.

Mephibosheth is the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul. His story is scattered throughout the book of 2 Samuel (4:4; 9:1-13; 16:1-4; 19:24-30; 21:7). Throughout the telling of Mephibosheth's story in 2 Samuel, we are made aware that he is living with a disability. In 2 Samuel 4, we read that during a time of conflict and war, Mephibosheth at the age of 5 was hurriedly picked up by a nurse who was carrying him to safety. As the nurse hurried to leave, Mephibosheth fell and injured both his legs to the extent that they became 'lame'. Today we would describe this as an acquired physical impairment or disability.

Read the Bible story in 2 Samuel 9

Consider reading the passage 2 Samuel 9, 2-3 times out loud. This will allow more time for people to hear God's heart for people with disabilities.

Discussion Questions

1. How did King David relate to Mephibosheth?
2. As Mephibosheth is welcomed to eat at the King's table, it is a powerful metaphor for the kingdom of God. People with disabilities (people living with a disability & people without disability) sit together side by side as equals at the feast table.
 - a. What can we learn from this when relating to people with disabilities within our mission expression?
 - b. How might you reflect the Kingdom of God in your mission expression?



- c. Who might you invite to the table?
3. What are some of Jesus' characteristics that King David reflected in his interaction with Mephibosheth?

Reflect and pray individually

Spend time individually in quiet reflection and prayer asking the Holy Spirit, what aspect of David and Mephibosheth's story or Jesus's characteristics could be magnified in your heart for you to relate better with people with disabilities.

Wait for 2-3 minutes in quiet, and then invite anyone in the group that would like to share what they heard from God.

Pray for each other

Close the study by spending some time praying together to reflect the Kingdom of God in our love for people with disabilities and asking God to guide us to grow our mission expression as a community of welcoming and belonging for people with disabilities.

Additional Facilitation Notes

Question 1

- David simply did what he would have done for any son of Jonathan.
- David treated him exactly as he would have done if Mephibosheth had been a powerful warrior. David gave him equal honour, welcomed him to his table, gave him Saul's land, and provided servants to farm it for him.
- David saw Mephibosheth through God's eyes.

Question 2

- Relate to people with disabilities with respect and equally and as individuals.
- Ask yourself 'who is not at the table?', be intentional to include everyone.
- Group members may want to name a person with a disability that God has placed on their heart to connect with.

Question 3

- Jesus showed hospitality towards people with disabilities (Luke 14).
- Jesus treated people with disabilities with love, kindness, and compassion (Mark 2; John 9).
- Jesus came so that people with disabilities might have life in abundance (John 10).

Further Guidance

Please contact the national Disability Inclusion Lead to discuss this study or seek advice on opportunities to be more inclusive of people with disabilities in your local mission expression, disabilityinclusion@salvationarmy.org.au