



Adult Devotion

Advocating From Love

1 Samuel 16:7 NIV

As with any relationship, having a loved one with a disability has its mountaintops and valleys. Your highs and lows, however, probably look different from your neighbors'. Your definition of a good day is probably unique. Now, some people might think it is that way with anyone, whether there is a disability or not, and they would be right. But as a family member of someone with a disability, you know there are details about your life and the life of your loved one that aren't the norm, even in a world of differences.

Think about the time when your reality became clear. Was it talking to a friend or neighbor? Maybe their child had a cold and needed to stay home from school. Did your thoughts immediately go to your child, who with a cold, could be hospitalized or have surgery delayed? Was it discussing the newest park or playground your loved one can't enjoy in a wheelchair? Maybe it was hearing a mom complain because their child will only eat certain foods and you are working hard to get your child to eat any food by mouth so they can graduate from a G-Tube. Does any of this sound familiar?

You are not alone.

Everyday moments emphasized by others can be a glaring reminder that our lives are different. Even in our church community, our lives can look different from other families, and that can be hard to accept. It can be difficult to focus on the joys of God's gifts when we don't know if our children will be accepted. It can feel overwhelming advocating for your child to be included with their peers in Sunday school and other activities. As parents and guardians, we want our children to be fully included in the church and learn about Jesus and His love for them.

FOCUS:

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider how handsome or tall he is. I have not chosen him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outside of a person. But the LORD looks at what is in the heart."

-1 Samuel 16:7 NIV



As Christians, we believe every person is fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. God created you and your child with a disability to be part of His family, and there will be moments when your child shares their gifts and talents in church. You will be amazed at what God does through them. There will also be moments when differences are at the forefront, and the opportunities present themselves for you to help others know how to be a brother or sister in Christ to your child. Some days will be rejuvenating; others may be exhausting, but know that every family has joys and sorrows, and the family of God is no different. The most important thing you can teach your child is that he or she is a beloved child of God. Your family is loved by God so much that He sent His Son Jesus to live and die to save you from your sins and give you new life in Him.

Psalm 139:13-14 NIV:

For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

1 Samuel 16:7 NIV:

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

As family members of a person with a disability, it's important to be authentic with your church family.

- Who in your congregation needs to know more information about your family member with a disability. Is it the pastor or a volunteer?

It's OK to be your family member's advocate, and it's OK to allow others to advocate for your family member in the church.

- Do you have friends or family who can advocate alongside you?

You are a beloved child of God; it's OK for you to ask for help from your church family.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for creating us in Your image, and sending Your Son Jesus to save us from our sins. Thank You for loving us and giving us a church family. Give us the strength to advocate for our loved one, and help us feel comfortable enough to ask for help.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.