

Different Gifts, But the Same Spirit

JUNIOR HIGH CATECHIST

INTRODUCTION

This lesson will enable the teacher and students to explore the uniqueness of each person with a special focus on people with disabilities and their inclusion in our church.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS LESSON

Students will:

- reflect on inclusion of people with disabilities through stories and experiences;
- discuss the gifts we bring to the Body of Christ using a passage from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians; and
- develop an action plan to assist them in becoming more aware of ways to be inclusive.

PREPARE YOURSELF

Read 1 Cor. 12:4-11, the scriptural basis for this lesson. Practice using "people-first" language, always emphasizing the person and his or her abilities before the disability. For example: a boy who uses a wheelchair, a girl who walks with crutches, or a man who is blind. Pathways Foundation's 25-minute DVD or video, *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors*, is a helpful starting point for thinking about inclusion. The DVD and its accompanying booklet may be available in your parish library. If not, you may schedule a free screening with a Pathways representative.



PREPARE MATERIALS

- Bible
- index cards or paper of same size
- pens
- paper to back the shields
- colored markers

TEACHING HINTS

1. To begin this lesson, ask the students to discuss what inclusion means. Has anyone experienced being excluded?
2. Read together the first paragraph of the story, *The Gifts We Have*.
3. Give students about 5 minutes to fill in the list of talents (student lesson page one).

a. If the students know each other well, have them do the following activity before sharing their personal lists of gifts/talents. Give each student an index card or small paper of the same size. On the top line, the students should write their own name then pass the card to the right. Each person in the group will list a gift/talent that they see the named person having. When the index card is returned to the owner, each student should compare the gifts listed with their own list. Also, spend some time sharing what they find difficult to do.

b. If the students do not know each other well, ask the students to form small groups and share their lists of gifts/talents.



4. Ask students to name disabilities and write them on the chalkboard – being careful to use correct terms (Down Syndrome, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, mental illness, heart disease, etc.) and people-first language (woman who uses a wheelchair, boy who is blind, person who has depressed spirits, etc.) Talk about which are visible and which are invisible disabilities. Read the rest of the first page of the story and add to the list of disabilities if necessary.

5. Read together the story, *A Young Girl's Gifts* (student lesson page 2).

6. Give the students 15 minutes to work on their shield (student lesson page three). If you have a space to display their work, mount and hang the shields. Otherwise, let the students mount the shields and take them home.

7. Read together the scripture verse from 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Ask the following questions to break open the Word:

- What are the different gifts to which St. Paul referred? Wisdom in discourse, power to express knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy...
- Who is the Body of Christ? We, the baptized members of our church, form the Body of Christ.
- How do our gifts benefit all in the church community? *We all have richer experiences when everyone participates.*

8. Look at the challenge questions and discuss your own church.

- Who ministers in your church? Is there anyone with a visible difference?
- Are missalettes available in large print for everyone?
- Are there loops or other assistive devices for people with hearing difficulties?
- Are there accessible pews throughout the church?
- Is the altar accessible?
- Are there curb cuts in the sidewalks outside the church?
- Are the restrooms accessible?

As a class, take a walk around the parish grounds and note what you see. Upon returning to the classroom, work together on forming a plan to place the questions before the right parish organizations.

For example, if there are not ministers with disabilities in your parish, go to the Liturgy team and ask what can be done to change that. If the church building needs to be more accessible, go to the parish council and raise the questions.

9. End the session by agreeing on an action that can be accomplished by your class. Also agree on actions for each student to take steps to

personally be more inclusive, like by using people-first language.

10. Join together in a prayer!

Dear Lord,

We thank you for the many different gifts you have given to all of us.

We thank you for inviting all to your table.

Help us to have open hearts to reach all those who want to join us.

Help us to have open minds to begin to know better the gifts that each person brings to our family.

Help us to open the doors of your church for all people.

We know your love is for each and every one of us!

AMEN.



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Produced and distributed by

Pathways.org TEAM Belong: That Every Ability May Belong

1-800-364-1337 www.teambelong.org

With Ecclesiastical Approbation – Archdiocese of Chicago – September 8, 1999

