

# Different Gifts, Same Spirit

Creating a Learning Community Where Everyone Belongs

## JUNIOR HIGH TEACHER

### 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 belonging for our church.

### OBJECTIVES OF THIS LESSON

Students will:

- reflect on belonging for 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 ensure that a sense of belonging extends to individuals with disabilities

### 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. Listen to the *That Every Ability May Belong* Video Training at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org). Review Know Your Disability Etiquette on pages 5-7 and *Reflecting on Belonging* available at [www.TEAMBelong.org](http://www.TEAMBelong.org).



### 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, "How do you feel when you know you belong?" Write students' feelings of belonging on the board.
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 and school buildings need 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 such as planning and celebrating TEAM Belong Month with your school and parish.
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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## **KNOW YOUR DISABILITY ETIQUETTE**

Use the tips below so that you know how to comfortably interact with classmates and parishioners of all abilities.

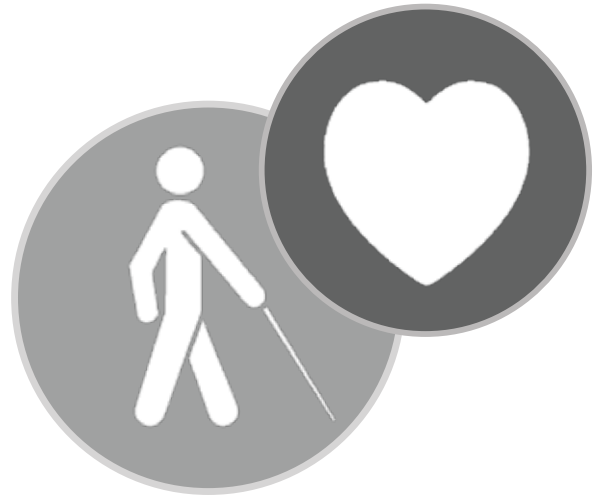
### GENERAL INFORMATION

1. What do you say when you meet a person with a disability? How about, “Hello?”
2. A warm smile and friendly conversation are very welcoming.
3. Speak directly to the person with a disability, not only to the family member, companion, interpreter or canine companion.
4. Use people-first language such as “people with disabilities” NOT “the disabled” and “a parishioner who is blind” NOT “a blind parishioner.”
5. Ask the person with the disability HOW you can help. Respect any refusal.
6. Offer accessible seating, large-print bulletins, missalettes, or assistive listening devices. Know where accessible washrooms are.
7. Recognize that each person has gifts and abilities. Ask parishioners with disabilities if they would like to usher, bring up the gifts, proclaim the word, etc. and provide any accommodations needed.
8. Be sensitive to where a person wishes to receive communion – at their seat or at the altar – and make sure they are accommodated.
9. Feel comfortable using words like see, walk, and listen with persons with disabilities.
10. Use accessibility logos in print materials and on signage.



## WELCOMING PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR HAVE VISION LOSS

1. Identify yourself when you greet the person. Tell the person when you are about to leave.
2. Talk normally, using your customary voice and typical expressions like “See you later.”
3. Offer your arm when assisting, the same way an usher does at a wedding.
4. Give verbal cues such as “We are going through a doorway.” Explain the traffic pattern with clear, calm instructions such as “Go up the center aisle.”



## WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY DIFFERENCES

1. Speak directly to the person.
2. Offer assistance, but accept a “No, thank you.”
3. Sit down so that you are at eye-level if the conversation will last more than a few minutes.
4. Shake hands or lightly touch a shoulder in the same way you would with others.
5. Keep a person’s wheelchair or walker near the person.

## WELCOMING PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

1. Face the person. He/she will appreciate seeing your facial expression and may read your lips. Your face, gestures, and body movements help in understanding.
2. Move closer rather than shout.
3. Speak clearly and slowly. Writing may be necessary. →

## WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH SPEECH DIFFERENCES

1. Be patient. Let a person talk at his/her own pace.
2. Remember a person may have communication means other than speech, such as writing.
3. Ask questions that require short answers or a shake of the head. If you cannot understand, rephrase the question.
4. Repeat or paraphrase what was said in order to confirm that you understand.



## WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES

1. Greet the person and interact normally.
2. Keep things simple and uncomplicated.
3. Treat people equally regardless of participation level; give prayer books or hymnals to all; allow everyone a chance to speak.