

PATHWAY FROM ISOLATION TO EMBRACE

What is the top issue facing the disability community? Isolation. The Devil has long used the tactic of isolation to discourage the people of God. God did not intend for people to live in isolation. Scripture makes that clear. What is the solution to this epidemic? Being embraced by Jesus through the local church.

ISOLATED

“The disability community needs the church, but more importantly, the church needs the disability community.”



A large portion of the disability community, about 8 in 10, were not in the labor force in 2018. Approximately 80% of people with disabilities are at home, isolated, and not actively involved in their communities. Couple that statistic with the fact that up to 90% of churches have no intentional outreach to their disability communities and what do you get? People affected by disability living in isolation and churches that are incomplete.

- **Roadblock for people affected by disability:** Hurt
- **Roadblocks for the church:** Acknowledgement, accessibility and attitudes
- **Key for overcoming roadblocks of this stage:** Courage
- **Scripture:** Genesis 2:18, Ecclesiastes 4:9
- **Resources:** Church Campus Accessibility Checklist, First Steps, Consultation

JUDGED

“The ministry of presence, or being present, is a real thing. People must be given the opportunity to see that they are more alike than different.”



No doubt, being judged can sound worse than being isolated. It doesn't sound much like a positive step forward. There are no shortcuts on the path however, and this is a necessary step forward along the path. It is a step of vulnerability for both those affected by disability and the church. People must take this step to have the opportunity to overcome the many untrue negative narratives that exist surrounding disability.

- **Roadblock for people affected by disability:** Forgiveness
- **Roadblocks for the church:** Lack of awareness
- **Key for overcoming roadblocks of this stage:** Change of heart
- **Scripture:** John 9:1-3, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 14, Luke 6:37
- **Resources:** “What does the Bible really say about disabilities?”, Church Survey, Consultation



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TOLERATED

“In order to move past being tolerated, existing in the same place with each other, each side must risk being in relationship with each other.”

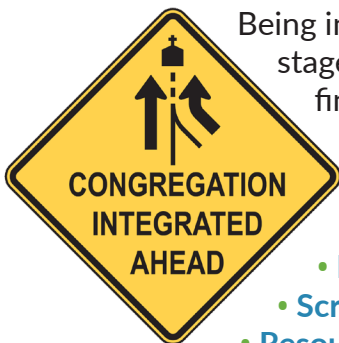


Existing in the same space is being tolerated. This is where many churches and individuals get stuck. There is a deep breath because the feeling of being judged has been overcome. Being in the same building together for a worship experience seems like a victory. This however was not meant to be the destination, but rather another temporary stop.

- **Roadblock for people affected by disability:** Patience
- **Roadblocks for the church:** Time
- **Key for overcoming roadblocks of this stage:** Rebuild trust
- **Scripture:** Exodus 23:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, Hebrews 13:2
- **Resources:** *My Friends, My Teachers* book, Ministry Information Sheet, Jesus Author of Disability Sermon, Consultation

INTEGRATED

“Indispensable literally means something that you cannot live without. The Apostle Paul recognized that the church is not complete without people affected by disability. Therefore, he referred to people affected by disability as indispensable to the church.”



Being integrated means relationships have been formed. Another name for this stage would be inclusion. Schools mandate it and preach it as the “win” or the final destination. While it is very close to the final destination, it falls just short. There is still a missing ingredient.

- **Roadblock for people affected by disability:** Expectations
- **Roadblocks for the church:** Resources
- **Key for overcoming roadblocks of this stage:** Intentionality
- **Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:22, Romans 12:4-5
- **Resources:** Curriculum, Next Steps, Training, Consultation

EMBRACED

“People affected by disability are no longer objects of ministry efforts, rather, they are actively ministering in the body of the church.”



Being embraced means that you have taken the final step on the path. You have moved beyond being integrated. Your relationships have deepened and moved beyond surface interaction. It means that you are missed when you aren't there. It means you have reached a place of belonging. It means that people affected by disability are taking on leadership roles through service.

- **Scripture:** Luke 14:4, 1 Corinthians 12:22
- **Resources:** Top Disability Bible Verses: Social Media Pack, Consultation, Ministry Locator