

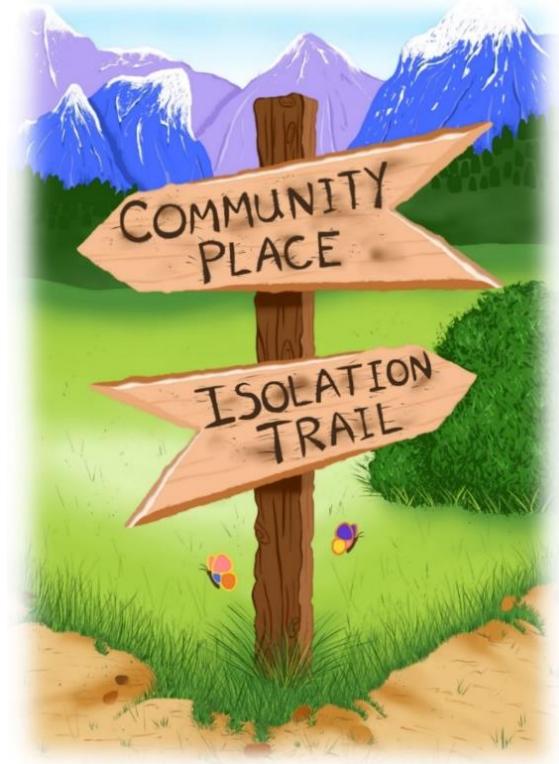
INDISPENSABLE

A training series for churches ministering
with adults with intellectual disabilities

TOPIC 8, EPISODE 3—COMPANION TRAINING

SPIRITUALITY AND PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

- Spirituality is an important part of the human experience. It is expressed through religious practice, spiritual activities and relationships that carry personal meaning and reflect the person's values.
- Churches are encouraged to build their capacity to welcome and embrace individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families and direct support staff.
- Our Christian brothers and sisters with intellectual disabilities all bring spiritual gifts and natural talents that were given to them by God. All members of the Body of Christ have gifts to build up the Church, as stated in **1 Corinthians 12**.
- Like all of us, people with intellectual disabilities practice their faith with varying degrees of understanding and enthusiasm. Some have a deep faith and trust in Jesus while others have yet to receive the gift of grace.
- Having a relationship with God does not eliminate the disability in someone's life, but God walks with us through all our difficulties, no matter what challenges we are given.



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SPIRITUALITY AND PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES CONTINUED

- Some people with disabilities are angry with God or the rest of the world for their disability. They can easily feel excluded from everything the world has to offer. A disability, or any other challenge, can be an excuse to keep someone from a relationship with God.
- Others find a deep need for God, possibly because of their disability. Some friends with disabilities seek a deeper relationship with God. They embrace Christian fellowship and are eager to use their spiritual gifts and talents to help others and build up the Church.
- All of us have similarities, but we are also very different, whether we have an intellectual disability or not. Some of our friends with disabilities may be less inhibited about their faith, and joyful in their fellowship with Jesus. Still others will resist relationships because people come and go in their lives.
- Regardless of each person's mindset, Christian community is important for those with and without disabilities. We all need to experience the love of Jesus and this is best experienced in Christian community.
- Church members have a wonderful opportunity to be an authentic friend to someone with a disability through ministries such as weekly Friendship groups. As relationships form with people with intellectual disabilities, here are some key concepts to keep in mind:
 - Your friend with a disability is a child of God just like you. They do not need your pity. They need your friendship.
 - All believers, including believers with intellectual disabilities have spiritual gifts. Ask God to help you see their spiritual gifts.
 - Find ways for your friends with disabilities to exercise their gifts.
 - Be watchful, listen, and be available. Be a friend!
 - Keep Biblical concepts simple.
 - Use concrete examples to explain a Bible lesson.
 - Relate the lesson to the individual's life. Help them apply the lesson to their life.
 - Teach by example, and model Christian behavior.

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SPIRITUALITY AND PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES CONTINUED

- Use repetition.
- Take advantage of visual aids in the Bible lesson, such as images, Bible study skits, costumes, puppets, and crafts.

