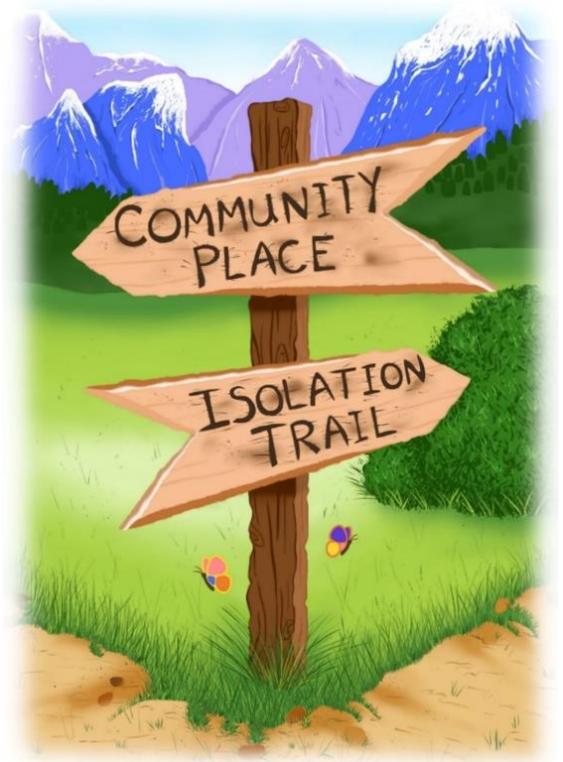


TOPIC 8, EPISODE 5—COMPANION TRAINING

FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES

- Paul explains in **first Corinthians 12** how every believer is given spiritual gifts for the common good. He goes on to say that the Body of Christ is one unit, but it is made up of many parts. Together, those parts make up one Body. As believers, we have been given spiritual gifts which give us the ability to fulfil the role we were given within the Body.
- This passage clearly states there are different gifts and different areas of service, but one Spirit and one Lord. The disability ministries in your churches provide opportunities for people to serve. No one person is gifted to take on all the roles necessary for an effective ministry.
- When one person tries to do it all on their own, many tasks receive insufficient attention or are completely ignored. Multiple team members are needed to take responsibility for all the necessary roles based on individual spiritual gifting, talents, and interests. It is important to note that spiritual gifting is not determined by one's comfort level.
- You might think, "*Where would I find all these people?*" The answer is: you may never fill every possible role. But for every role you do fill, your ministry will be stronger.



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FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES CONTINUED

- Some members of your team may be gifted in several areas and have the capacity and ability to take on multiple roles. The roles needed for your Friendship group will in part be determined by the format of your meetings. Every group is different, but there are **Primary Roles** that will be common to every group.
- The most important role is the **Companion**, and every person involved in your ministry can be one. A companion is simply a friend. Every friend with a disability, family member, direct support staff, or volunteer can be a friend. A companion may also be the group leader, Bible teacher, or lead a small group.
- Friendship group meetings begin with the entire group of friends with disabilities and team members coming together for a time of worship. Therefore, a **Music and Worship Leader** is important.
 - Music is a vital part of worship in Friendship groups; however, this does not mean this person needs to be a musician. Live music is always preferred. Some Friendship groups meet on the same night that the praise team band practices, which allows the praise team to lead the group with a few songs.
 - Music leaders can also use technology for songs, such as YouTube playlists where video slides can be projected with lyrics. Other ideas include song books, simple musical instruments, and CDs.
- Following worship, the large group stays together for a Bible lesson. Having **Large Group Bible Teachers** to lead these lessons is very important. Friendship groups are encouraged to have at least two people who are gifted for teaching. This will allow for more time to prepare if the teachers are not teaching every week. It also provides backup when a teacher needs to miss class.
 - Bible teachers need to plan each lesson, pulling together the visual aids, skits, and costumes. Lesson plans should include the main points of the Bible lesson and real-life applications.

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES CONTINUED

- After the large group lesson, many of the Friendship groups break into smaller groups. Each small group needs at least one **Small Group Leader** to facilitate the discussion of the lesson with real-life applications and prayer time. Each small group consists of adult friends, family members, direct support staff, and volunteer companions.
 - Small groups help those with disabilities connect the lesson to their lives. Some Friendship groups can have as many as five discussion groups.
 - It is important for the Friendship Leadership team to plan the meeting schedule with assigned lessons in advance. This will give the Small Group Leaders access to the lesson material, so they can prepare for their discussion time long before the meeting.
- Smaller Friendship groups that do not break into small groups or prefer that prayer time is done during the large group time use a **Prayer Leader**. The Prayer Leader gathers prayer requests and leads the prayer time.
 - Prayer time can include praying over the concerns from the congregation's prayer list. The Prayer Leader can also share the Friendship groups' prayer requests with the church after getting permission.
- Friendship groups typically end their evening with fellowship time that may be accompanied by a snack. A **Snack Coordinator** can facilitate volunteer companions and members of the church who are not able to be part of the weekly group to exercise their gift of hospitality by providing snacks.
 - It is important to be aware of special dietary needs when providing meals or snacks. We will cover more about special dietary needs in the Administration and Safety Topic.
- **Hospitality Leaders** can send cards or fliers notifying participants about Friendship group events. They can also arrange for cards and gifts to be presented to adult friends for birthdays and holidays, as well as mail cards to those friends who have been absent from the group.
- There are other **Primary Roles** that take place behind-the-scenes. These roles are equally important for the effectiveness of the Friendship group. These roles will need people with the spiritual gifts to carry them out.

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES CONTINUED

- In an earlier episode we talked about the leader who champions the ministry in your church. This person will benefit from a strong gift of **Leadership**. It will be their role to be the spokesperson for their ministry team to the congregation leaders and members. He or she will need to energize people by creating a vision for disability ministry in their church and inspire people to make the vision a reality.
- This leader may or may not have the gift of **Administration**. If the leader championing the ministry is not gifted with administration, a co-leader can be recruited who has this gift.
 - Administration comes from a unique Greek term that refers to a shipmaster or captain. The literal meaning of the word is “to steer.” It carries the idea of someone who guides and directs a group of people toward a goal or destination.
 - A leader with the gift of administration is enabled to organize, direct, implement plans, and guide others in the various roles that advance the ministry. This gift, while closely related to the gift of leadership, is goal or task oriented and more concerned with details and organization.
 - This leader will help the entire leadership team stay organized and follow important safety procedures, like completing applications, background screens, dietary and emergency contact records, and reporting abuse.
- An important administrative role is **Registration**. This leader does much of their work behind-the-scenes by maintaining up to date participant applications, criminal background screens, emergency contact information, dietary restrictions, and maintaining class rosters.
- It is important to keep **Attendance Records** for the Friendship group. Attendance is encouraged when certificates are presented to a friend with a disability who has attended a set number of meetings. These attendance records can also assist volunteers with sending notes to friends or volunteers who have not attended in a while.

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES CONTINUED

- There may be times when it is necessary to contact everyone in the Friendship group due to an illness, the need pass along prayer requests, or bad weather. A systematic **Phone Tree** can simplify the process. All the necessary information is available from the registration process and can be divided up between multiple callers.
- Providing our friends with disabilities opportunities to serve gives them chance to exercise their spiritual gifts. A **Service Project Coordinator** can ensure these events take place. These events can engage the congregation and friends with disabilities, families, and direct support staff.
 - Some examples include packing gift boxes for college students who are away from home, care packages for disaster victims, and day-long service projects in the community. It is good to participate with projects the congregation is already doing or recruit other small groups in the church to work on projects with the Friendship group.
- In addition to the primary roles, there are **Secondary Roles** which may not be necessary for conducting a Friendship group meeting, but are still critical to building community, raising awareness, and advancing the ministry. These roles will further strengthen the Friendship Group and encourage more church members to participate and utilize their spiritual gifts.
- **Special Event Coordinator** plans dinners and fellowship activities outside the church. This can also include church-related events that welcome the congregation into fellowship with the Friendship Group.
 - Holidays like Christmas and Easter are a wonderful time to hold special events. Picnics and pitch-in meals are fun at the start and end of the group's season.
- **Family and Support Staff Liaison** can foster strong relationships with families and support staff. They keep them informed about the Friendship Group schedule and special events.
 - This can be done through phone calls, emails, flyers, and visits to the homes. It is important to build and maintain strong relationships with families and direct support staff and relay their prayers to the Friendship group and congregation.

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES CONTINUED

- There is an extremely high turnover with support staff working for residential providers. Many times, our friends with disabilities living in a home will stop coming to Friendship group when these changes take place. For this reason, it is important to quickly build relationships with new support staff as they begin working in a home.
- **Crafts** do not need to be part of every meeting, but these activities are thoroughly enjoyed when they can be part of the meeting schedule. Crafts are best when related to the Bible lesson or planned service project.
- Every Friendship group will benefit from a volunteer gifted for **Technology**. Worship music and the use of projected visual aids enhance the Friendship large group time. Someone skilled using technology is necessary to help the teachers and worship leaders operate microphones, computer equipment, and power point.
- Members of your congregation and the surrounding community will not be aware the church has a disability ministry without continual **Promotion**. There are a variety of ways church members can help promote the ministry.
- **Photography or Videography** can tell your story better than a thousand words. Find someone gifted with digital photography and store these photos in a location where your promotion team members have access to the photos.
- Take pictures of your group meetings, and special events. Have video testimonials of volunteers, friends with disabilities, and family members. Be sure to include a photo, video, and story release as part of your application process.
- **Printed bulletin and newsletters** should list the Friendship group with a description, contact information, meeting day, time, and location.
- **Sunday announcements and atrium video screens** are a great way to promote special events and opportunities for the congregation to experience the Friendship group. Be careful not to overuse this platform, otherwise your effort becomes white noise to your audience.

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP ROLES CONTINUED

- **Social Media** is an effective way to reach church members. Identify and develop posts for the platforms used by the congregation and develop a relationship with the person who manages the social media. Find out the best way to get your content posted through this person. Be sure to accompany every post with great photos or videos.
 - If your congregation does not use social media, create your own social media page and invite members of your church to follow your ministry.
- Roles for volunteers who cannot be a part of your weekly gatherings can include a liaison to other small groups in the church, making costumes, a card ministry, transportation, puppet ministry, and even financial support.
- You will not find someone to fill all these roles. However, through promoting these roles in your church you may attract people gifted for these roles. These points of entry make it possible to find new people that may not otherwise consider participating in a ministry with people with disabilities.

Connection Ministries Links to Curriculum:

<https://connection-ministries.org/connection-ministries-curricula-resources/>

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