

That Their BURDENS

*We show love to those with physical disabilities
when we serve them as the Savior did.*



May Be LIGHT



For those with physical disabilities, elements of Church service—such as getting around in the meetinghouse, seeing the blackboard, or participating in callings or activities—may present challenges. Members can follow the Savior’s example by showing an extra measure of love to people with disabilities to ease their burdens. In this article members share ways leaders, teachers, and friends have adapted Church programs and activities to accommodate disabled members’ needs.

Leading with Love

As an individual who has lived all my life with a visual impairment, I have appreciated teachers and leaders who took the time to find out about me and my needs. The following suggestions may be helpful for those teaching and planning activities involving people with disabilities:

1. Don’t let others’ disabilities make you uncomfortable.

Get to know people who have disabilities just as you would those without limitations. Do not avoid them. Talk to them about their likes and dislikes. If you don’t know how to act around them, let them teach you.

2. If you don’t know what to do, ask. Ask how you can help them get the most out of lessons or activities, as they can tell you best what they need. For example, when teaching those who don’t see well, a teacher may want to ask if they need materials in large or dark print. The teacher may also describe visual aids and read aloud what is written on the board. Do not shy away from asking questions like, “How can we best adapt this activity to help meet your needs?” and “How can I be the most help to you?” If the individual with a disability is a child, you may want to speak to his or her parents for ideas.

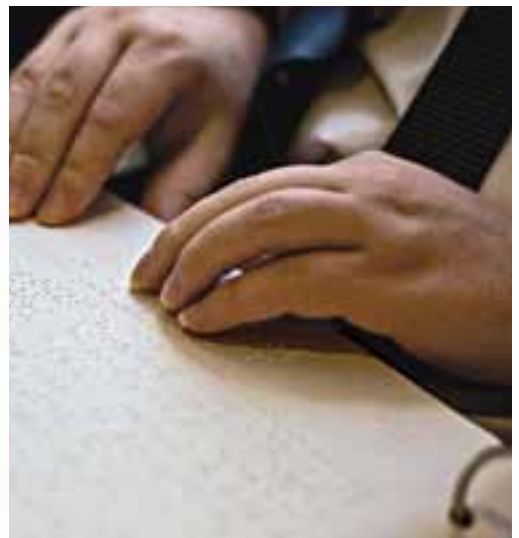
3. Plan together. When planning activities, invite participants with disabilities to give their input whenever possible. Most of the time, an activity can be adapted to meet any special needs.

4. Show others how to lead with love. Others will follow your lead as you interact in love and kindness with those with disabilities.

I will always be grateful to a sweet Young Women leader who never treated me as “different” but as an important member of the group. She encouraged me to share my testimony of how Christ had helped me through my trials.

By following these simple suggestions, along with the guidance of the Spirit, teachers and leaders will be effective instruments in bringing God’s children— with and without disabilities—nearer to Him.

Kristin W. Belcher, Utah



Get to know people who have disabilities just as you would those without limitations. If you don't know how to act around them, let them teach you.

Senior Sacrament

When my dad was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, he experienced a steady, relentless physical decline. While he once bicycled 25 miles a day, played tirelessly with his grandchildren, and tended the yard, it soon became a struggle for him to put one foot in front of the other.

With Dad's increasingly limited mobility, he and Mom decided to move to a senior retirement residence to be closer to my family. When I contacted the Relief Society president in their new ward to acquaint her with their needs, she was eager to tell me about a program the ward had recently initiated: monthly sacrament meetings held at the retirement complex with the help of the youth. When I told my parents, they were excited not only about the meetings but also about the prospect of living in a ward so willing to reach out to its eldest members.

For the remainder of

Dad's life, he and Mom never missed a "Senior Sacrament Meeting." On appointed Sundays, Dad, with Mom close at his side, rolled his walker down the hallway to gather with youth and leaders from their ward. The young men and women served enthusiastically every month, administering the sacrament, leading music, and offering talks.

I saw the impact of this service when Dad and Mom came with my family to watch a dance festival. During the finale, a group of Beehives from my parents' ward danced in the aisle near our seats. When the program ended, one of those young women approached Dad, a beaming smile on her face. She knelt down to greet him face to face and spoke with him a few moments before she hurried on her way. Later, when I asked Mom about the smiling girl, she looked at Dad softly and replied, "That was one of the young women who helped at our sacrament meeting the other day."

The radiant look on my mother's face said it all. I felt the Spirit speak to my heart, and I thanked my Heavenly Father for helping my parents again feel the warm reassurance of being a valued part of a ward family.

Renee Hancock Huskey, Oregon

The Day Joie Crawled

In 1979 our family hoped to enroll our daughter Joie, who suffered from multiple disabilities—including a hearing impairment—in a school for the deaf. But even though Joie was three and a half years old, she was barely able to roll over, and her application was turned down.

I was disheartened at being turned away. But when I learned of exercise therapy, I felt it could help Joie. The therapy required three people at a time to help Joie perform exercises and had to be done each morning,

afternoon, and evening. I wondered how we could possibly pull it off.

One Sunday I explained Joie's situation to a fellow ward member. She told me she wanted to help. She scheduled more than 40 ward members to come to our home for one hour at a time throughout the week. With the help of these wonderful brothers and sisters, Joie underwent her

therapy eight hours per day, seven days per week, for ten months. Six months into the program, Joie learned to crawl. Other advances soon followed.

Initially, I was overwhelmed by my ward members' service. As I prayed to the Lord for direction, I felt strongly we were to continue because Joie was not the only one being blessed. I saw this manifest the Sunday after she learned to crawl. We were sitting in the back of the chapel with Joie when she began crawling up the aisle. Normally I would have retrieved her, but I felt impressed to let her go. Most of her volunteers had not yet seen her crawl. As people turned to watch Joie, many had tears flowing.

Our bishop later told us that Joie made his job much easier. He had never experienced more love and

unity in a ward than during the time the members were serving one precious daughter of God.

Lily Kolditz, Washington

The Worth of Souls

I am both a Church leader and a member with a disability. I was born with spina bifida, a neural tube defect that leaves many paralyzed and many more with walking difficulties.

While I was growing up, my parents did all they could to support me in the youth programs of the Church. I



When planning activities, invite participants with disabilities to give their input. Often the activity can be adapted to meet special needs.

earned my Eagle Scout rank and served a mission. When my bishop submitted my mission paperwork, he indicated that I would function best serving somewhere flat, where walking and bicycling would not be so labored. Consequently, I was called to the Fresno California Mission. I am grateful my bishop recognized that even though I had a disability, with a slight adjustment, I could still serve a regular full-time mission.

I now serve as a high priests group leader, and I recognize that my disability does not allow me to do everything I would like. For example, I cannot help members move in or out of their homes, nor can I easily stand to greet others as they enter the chapel for Sunday services. But I can organize a move. I can provide use of my truck. I can visit members in their homes, particularly the aged and infirm. When I see an elderly sister whose legs pain her, I can look her in the eyes and tell her I know how she feels. I can remind her that Jesus Christ overcame physical pain and death so that one day we will too and that all of us are sons and daughters of the Most High with infinite worth and potential.

David M. Rushton, Texas

Blessings of the Scriptures in Braille

While serving as president of the Mexico Monterrey East Mission, I attended the dedication of a chapel in the Reynosa East Stake in northern Mexico with my wife. At the service, two excited missionaries introduced us to a recently baptized family. As I shook the hand of one of the teenage daughters, Ilse, I noticed that her



Disabilities may not allow members to do everything they would like, but there are many ways they can serve.

vision was severely limited. I placed my hand in hers and told her how pleased I was that she had been baptized and that it was an honor to meet her. A sweet smile came to her face.

When I asked if Ilse had a copy of the audiotapes of the Book of Mormon to listen to, her mother informed me that Ilse could read braille. I knew the Church offered

some braille materials, but I didn't know if they were available in Spanish. Although Ilse spoke some English, I felt I needed to find some materials in her native language.

Upon returning to Monterrey, we inquired with the distribution center and were surprised at the number of resources available to those with visual impairments. We found that a neighboring mission had a Spanish copy of

the Book of Mormon in braille (item no. 34584004), which they generously shared with us.

The next week we were scheduled to travel again to Reynosa. We asked Ilse's family if they could meet us at the church. When they arrived, we unpacked the seven volumes of the Book of Mormon in braille for Ilse. I opened the first volume and placed Ilse's hand on the cover sheet. She moved her hand across the page, and with a huge smile said, "El Libro de Mormón."

Later, we provided Ilse Spanish copies in braille of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, *True to the Faith*, and the pamphlet *Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Through her fingers, Ilse is now blessed with the joy of studying the gospel in Spanish. ■

John Taylor, president of the Mexico Monterrey East Mission