

For Parents of Little Ones

You may have experienced it before—you're in the grocery store or at the park, and your children see someone in a wheelchair. They may point, ask loud questions, stare, or even act afraid. The good news is that some preparation can help your little ones (and you!) treat everyone like the son or daughter of God that they are.



Here are some ideas to help your child better interact with those who have disabilities or injuries:

■ Show pictures of a variety of people, including people with visible disabilities. First, focus on similarities. For example, everyone is a child of God. Next, talk about differences. For example, some people need wheelchairs to get around, and others don't. Teach children that all these things make us different and unique.

■ Be careful with the words you use. Avoid words like "sick" or "wrong" when talking about someone with a disability. Make sure your children understand that they won't "catch" a disability.

■ Sing "I'll Walk with You" (*Children's Songbook*, 140-141). Look at pictures or watch videos of children using wheelchairs, crutches, or service animals. Explain what these are and why some people use them. Role play how to behave when you meet someone with a disability.

■ Set an example of smiling and saying hello. If your child says something insensitive to someone, don't ignore the situation. Say something like, "I'm sorry, my child is still learning." Then encourage a short, healthy interaction between your child and the person with the disability.