

COURSE SYLLABUS
Disabilities and the Church, OCE655, 2 hours
Andrew J. Peterson, Ph.D.
Reformed Theological Seminary, Virtual

Professor

Dr. Andy Peterson worked professionally in the area of disabilities as a licensed psychologist and supervisor at the Family and Child Guidance Center, a community mental health/mental retardation center in Pennsylvania (1977 - 1983). Preparation was with degrees in psychology from Western Washington University and in educational psychology from U. C. Berkeley, including an NIMH fellowship for mental health consultation in the schools.

He then taught as an assistant professor in the Psychology Department at Grove City College, applying a Christian worldview to theoretical and practical psychology (1983 - 1988). For the past ten years, Dr. Peterson has taught pastoral courses at Westminster Theological Seminary, California, in the field of Christian counseling for personal and family problems.

In 1997, Dr. Peterson joined RTS to help establish the Virtual Campus for distance education in theological studies, including the first fully accredited, fully distance graduate degree in theology. As Senior Vice President, Dr. Peterson directs a full range of customer service, promotional marketing, student services, course development and educational technology. For the past few years, RTS has worked with Joni and Friends Ministries to offer training in disability ministry on campus, in churches and through various media.

Course Description

Persons with disabilities and children with special needs are an indispensable part of the prevailing church! This course reviews various physical and mental disabilities so that the ministry of the church might be more effective in evangelism and edification of those suffering such problems. Special issues in outreach, family dynamics, and church life are considered from biblical and pastoral perspectives. This course is not focused on medical details of the disabilities; although, the more information about such problems, the better. Here we bring to bear the spiritual, philosophical and psychological dimensions, which are, in fact, crucial for progress in medical science as well as holiness and happiness for people vis a vis disabilities.

Required Reading

Eareckson Tada, Joni. *When God Weeps: Why Our Suffering Matters to the Almighty*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

_____. *Barrier-Free Friendships: Bridging the Distance Between You and Friends With Disabilities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

Eareckson Tada, Joni and Joni and Friends Ministries, with Steve Miller. *How to Create an Effective Disability Outreach in Your Church*. Forest, VA: Church Growth Institute, 1995.

Kelly, Douglas. *If God Already Knows, Why Pray?* Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1995.

Numbers, Ronald L., and Darrel W. Amundsen. *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Traditions*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Pratt, Richard. *Pray With Your Eyes Open*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987.

All required books are available through the RTS Online Bookstore at <www.rts.edu/bookstore>.

Recommended Reading

Eareckson Tada, Joni. *A Step Further: Growing Closer to God Through Hurt and Hardship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978.

Frost, Harry. *Miraculous Healing*. Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1931, 1999.

Warfield, B. B. *Counterfeit Miracles*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1918.

The following are sample web sites for lesson 23

<http://anatomy.uams.edu/>

<http://www.bartleby.com/107/>

Student Objectives

1. Student knows a curriculum for developing a special ministry to those with disabilities in the church.
2. Student knows apologetic responses for the problem of pain and other objections likely from those suffering disabilities.
3. Student knows a biblical theology of suffering.
4. Student knows approaches for basic pastoral counseling about disabilities and related family dynamics.
5. Student knows how to promote ministry to persons with disabilities in the church and the community.
6. Student understands how the formal offices and members of the church are responsible and privileged to serve those with disabilities.
7. Student teaches others how to build friendships, evangelize, and disciple persons with disabilities.
8. Student advises church building committee on improvements for accessibility.
9. Student empathizes with persons from an increasingly wider range of disabilities.
10. Student interacts in the medical context for consultation and advocacy with the professionals.
11. Student values the importance of Christians with disabilities as indispensable to the church.
12. Student serves Christians with disabilities with biblical approaches to healing, counsel, and prayer.

Course Requirements

Online Student Handbook

The Online Student Handbook is a guide that contains information for participation in this course. Needed forms may be downloaded and printed from this site. You will find it located on the RTS/Virtual website under Resources. Check here for all the latest updates.

Requirements in Brief

All work is to be completed within four months from the time that you enroll in this course.

Follow the Study Guide provided.

Listen to all recorded lectures.

Complete all readings.

Reaction Dialogue paper

Church Design paper

Church Project Development

Mid-term exam

Final exam

Mentor Report/Class Application Paper

Reaction Dialogue (submit at midterm, 10%)

Write an imaginary, evangelistic, apologetic discussion about suffering between you and an unbelieving person who has a serious disability. The script should be three to five pages.

Church Project Design (submit at midterm, 10%)

Do needs assessment (survey and interviews to find status quo about disability ministry in your church), situation analysis (resources and limitations of a local church for disability ministry), and team organization (who can help in what roles with what goals?) and write a preliminary design for your church in regard to training for a disability ministry.

Church Project Development (submit at final, 15%)

Specify objectives (What will your students know, do and feel after the class?), select media (from white board to handouts to multimedia slides and video), and construct an outline, plan or prototype of the scope and sequence of the curriculum and a sample of ministry materials for a 13 week Adult Sunday School or weekly small group class on disability ministry. In some situations, you may want to plan for a Disability Awareness Sunday for your church.

Examinations (Midterm: 30%, Final: 30%)

There are two examinations for this course. The mid-term examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lesson One through Lesson Twelve. The final examination will cover the lectures and readings from Lesson Thirteen through Lesson Twenty-four.

All exams are to be requested online (<http://virtual.rts.edu/>). All exams are proctored. Upon completion, please follow all instructions on the Exam Request page concerning how to submit your exam to RTS/Virtual.

Mentor Report/Course Application Paper (5%)

Each MA Distance student is required to have his mentor submit a report at the end of the course. This report will contribute to 5% of the student's grade. For students who are not registered in the MA program, you are asked to write a 200 word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life.

Assignments

All Assignments are due the last day of the course (See start letter), unless stipulated otherwise in this syllabus. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Virtual Campus before the deadline. Assignments are to be submitted as e-mail attachments . Please place course title in the subject heading (E-mail: vcstudentservices@rts.edu).

Time Limit

All course work, including exams, papers, reading requirements, is to be completed within four months from your course start date.

Contact Information

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COURSE OUTLINE

Disabilities and the Church, OCE655, 2 hours

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Lesson One: Introduction: Bodies, Weaknesses, and Progress

DISABILITIES AND THE CHURCH is about knowing God in the midst of suffering and seeing His purposes fulfilled through human weakness and His power. Course outline and review of syllabus.

Lesson Two: Presuppositions and Procedures

By God's Word, knowing the deep reality of disabilities including the relationship of body and soul and how to promote the best health of each together.

Lesson Three: Your Church Context

The community of faith as a resource for physical and spiritual strength - being served and serving others. The church offers teaching, counseling, fellowship, support, and discipline to every believer. It is personal and dependable help.

Lesson Four: Broken Bodies

Overview of physical, mental, and sensory disabilities including medical etiology and diagnosis as well as effects on family and lifestyle.

Lesson Five: Apologetics: The Problem of Pain

How can a loving God cause such pain for me? How can this question even be asked without a loving, self-revealing God? What is the role of my original and particular sin in illness and disease?

Lesson Six: Evangelistic Outreach

90% of 30 million people with disabilities are unchurched.

Lesson Seven: Church Buildings

Architectural accommodations for evangelism and edification. Funding building projects with the tithe (and debt??).

Lesson Eight: The Medical Context (Dr. Blair Bryan)

A physician will describe the process and substance of diagnosis in our six conditions of physical, mental and perceptual disabilities. The relationship with the patient will be emphasized for good assessment and treatment to the glory of God.

Lesson Nine: Technology and Employment

Advances in technology have helped with everyday living as well as provided adaptive tools for productivity in the workplace. Byron Sellers of Joni and Friends Ministeries will discuss seeing Christ by the Holy Spirit and personal faith through disability in the workplace and the community.

Lesson Ten: Instructional Design for Training

Needs assessment, situation analysis, team organization, objectives specification, media selection, and prototype construction are necessary to prepare productive training for ministry and disabilities.

Lesson Eleven: The Undershepherds' Ministry

What are the responsibilities of the pastors and elders for the members with sickness and disabilities? How does effective leadership provide a blessed context for church life.

Lesson Twelve: Diaconal Helping

Ministry of mercy for that other main problem: practical helps. Church Projects.

Lesson Thirteen: Sanctification (with Byron Sellers, MA, staff member and counselor, Joni and Friends Ministries/C Carolinas, Charlotte, NC)

We are promised by Jesus Christ to be perfected by Him. The role of suffering and disabilities is highlighted. The process of sanctification is discussed in the context of these thorns in the flesh. Progress in sanctification helps us to see how we can “count it all joy” in the midst of disabilities.

Lesson Fourteen: A Theology of Suffering: From Pain to Ministry (with Rick Jordan, Life Support Center, First Baptist Southern Baptist Church of Indian Trail, NC)

The purpose and limitation of personal suffering will be discussed from a biblical perspective, including implications for counseling and discipleship.

Lesson Fifteen: Death and Dying for the Christian

A discussion about such topics as “Dying well,” hospices and the stages of grief.

Lesson Sixteen: Health and the Bible

OT and NT review of miraculous healing and the treatment process for the church.

Lesson Seventeen: Faith Healers on TV

Update on popular faith healers on television and the Net. Biblical perspective on the gift of healing from the apostolic period is presented.

Lesson Eighteen: Effective Prayer

“If God already knows, why ask?” As both object and maker of many prayers, one with disabilities requires a rich prayer life.

Lesson Nineteen: Listening Carefully

A discussion on the Credentials for helpful discipleship and counseling. Guidelines for gaining Social History and conducting the interview in more formal counseling and guidance.

Lesson Twenty: Making a Plan

Sizing up the person's needs, strengths and weakness is making a "diagnosis," which is the platform for providing discipleship with good counsel and education.

Lesson Twenty-One: Specific Problems

Counseling with Fear, Worry, Anger, Depression and Dependency. Discipleship and pastoral counseling with biblical understanding and practical homework for the problems of fear, worry, anger, depression and dependency.

Lesson Twenty-Two: Family Dynamics

Family Dynamics are the context for the daily life of most people, even more so for the home-bound.

Lesson Twenty-Three: Working with Families and Professionals (Dr. Blair Bryan and Byron Sellers)

Ministry to family and professionals by physician and the person with the disability. Direction is given on how to best consult with physicians for interdisciplinary practice and Christian perspective.

Lesson Twenty-Four: Church-based Ministry (Joni and Friends: Becky Albright, Leila Campbell, and an interview with Doug Maza)

Leila Campbell and Becky Albright speak regarding the ministry of Joni and Friends in Charlotte. Donn De Hart (Director of Course Development for RTS/V) interviews Doug Maza (Executive Vice President of Joni and Friends) regarding (1) State of the Church and disability ministries (2) Examples of how God has used persons with disabilities (3) and future priorities of Joni and Friends.

COURSE CHURCH PROJECT
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The purpose of this class project is to give real hope and help to a local church as she seeks to serve with evangelism and edification those with disabilities. All efforts are intended to assist the local or regional church at its present stage of development and gifting. Students are to work as servants in respect to leadership so as to not condemn or reproach the current ministry of the congregation. Rather, each student is to help leadership assess the state of disability ministry and plan next steps on this topic.

RESOURCES

Each student should discuss serving the church in this area with his or her leadership. The main print resource is: Eareckson Tada, Joni and Joni and Friends Ministries with Miller, Steve. *How to Create an Effective Disability Outreach in Your Church*. Forest, VA: Church Growth Institute, 1995.

PHASES

PROGRAM DESIGN (*Submit at Midterm*)

- I. Needs Assessment: Survey and interview select church members concerning disability ministry in the church.
 - A. Write draft of survey for review by professor.
 - B. Submit revised survey for review by church leadership.
 - C. Administer survey to church members.
 - D. Review survey data.
 - E. Write draft of structured interview for follow-up of select respondents.
 - F. Interview select respondents by phone and/or in-person.
 - G. Write status quo, ideal biblical model, and problem statement of the difference.

- II. Situation Analysis: Review the resources and constraints in the fellowship for a church-based disability ministry:
 - A. Knowledge of biblical basis for disability
 - B. Current relevant activities
 - C. Commitment to discipleship
 - D. Time availability
 - E. Monetary resource
 - F. Facility advantages, disadvantages, cf. accessibility checklist.
 - G. Other church projects

- III. Team Organization: Who will be helping with this ministry?
 - A. Roles in overall effort and specific projects
 - B. Goals for group and individuals within the roles

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT *(Submit at Final)*

IV. Objectives Specification

- A. What will the person think?
- B. What will the person do?
- C. What will the person feel?
- D. How to make the ministry “responsive”?
 1. Personalized (immediate feedback, exploration, discovery, intrinsic pacing, holistic)
 2. Productive (helpful for future opportunities and challenges)
 3. Perspective (agent, patient, reciprocator, referee)
 4. Deotelic (God-centered motivation)

V. Media Selection

- A. Personal evangelism or discipleship
- B. Teaching to a group
- C. Print materials
- D. Slide show
- E. Audiotape/radio
- F. Videotape/television
- G. Web page

VI. Prototype Construction

- A. Sample production for alpha testing
- B. Ministry specifications
- C. Checklist of assumptions
- D. Organization of people and materials
- E. Timetable for milestones
- F. Record of walk-through’s at milestones
- G. Evaluation of assumptions

AFTER THE CLASS *(Due to your church in God’s timing!)*

VII. Ministry Implemented

VIII. Ministry Evaluated

- A. Objectives reached?
- B. Needs met?
- C. Unintended effects?