

Leader's Guide

Chapter 3 Disability Doubters

The Third Week of Lent

Assignments for Week 3:

- Read Chapter 3 Disability Doubters from My Body is Not a Prayer Request
- Complete the quiz on page 52 & 53 in My Body is Not a Prayer Request

Scripture Reading: John 20:24-29 Jesus Appears to Thomas

Video: – Travis and his mom Judy

Discussion Questions:

Use the book for the following discussion questions:

1. In Chapter 3, Disability Doubters, on page 40, Amy Kenny includes a long list of television shows in which characters pretend to be disabled to scam the system in some way in order to gain a settlement, a spouse, or sympathy from the charade. While relatively harmless in a serial crime drama this suspicion that someone is faking disability for emotional or financial gain spills over into the real world. This often leads to people thinking they can interrogate individuals with disabilities without cause.

If you're being honest, have there been times when you've doubted the existence of the severity of someone's disability? Why?

- Handicapped Parking
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Have you ever questioned a person about their disability for this reason?

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What are some things we could do as a church in order to prevent or lessen this skepticism and interrogation?

- Include a prayer time for individuals with specific disabilities just as we do for a neighboring church (MS, Smith-Magenis Syndrome, Down Syndrome, Autism, Long COVID etc.)
- Include a brief overview of the disability along with a place to go for more information in the church program and weekly newsletter.
- Highlight disabilities that are not necessarily visible or evident.
- Include videos of individuals with disabilities that are not visible or evident.

2. In Chapter 3, Disability Doubters, on page 45, Amy Kenny talks about the charity model of disability: it casts disabled people as in constant need of others' generosity. She says that this is the same thinking that leads churches to host a "special needs prom" instead of providing accommodations that benefit the entire disability community. Disabled people are asked to graciously accept the altruism of the community instead of expecting inclusion as part of being fellow humans. MUMC hosts "special needs proms". Do you think MUMC should continue to host these events or make provisions for a more inclusive prom?
 - Yes, it provides a fun, safe environment for students to come together and have a wonderful time together. I don't think this is provided out of pity or to be patronizing. The students and their families love it.
 - Yes, we should continue the special needs prom. Some of the participants can not tolerate the noise and distractions of a typical prom. There are breakout rooms to accommodate for sensory needs that a typical prom would not have.
 - No, we should look for ways to be more inclusive of others.
 - Night to Shine Prom and Metro Prom are examples in our community.
3. Complete the quiz in Chapter 3 on page 53, and take some time to reflect on it. Have you considered these concerns before taking the quiz? Share any personal thoughts or realizations that came to you after taking the quiz.
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Scripture Reading: John 20:25-29 Jesus appears to Thomas

4. On page 50, Kenny states that "Thomas is *all* disability doubters". What does she mean by this?
 - Just as Thomas questions the disciples and needs to witness Jesus' wounds for himself, disability doubters often question, probe, and doubt when interacting with people with disabilities.
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5. What can we learn from this scripture as it relates to people with disabilities?
 - Disability is not always explainable, visible or understandable.
 - We should have faith that disability is valid and real.
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Additional Activities:

Read the Top Ten "Disability Denials" on page 55. What do they mean to you?

Terms:

Charity model of disability - The idea that accommodations are out of altruism and are not based on civil rights. It casts disabled people as in constant need of others' generosity and suggests that disabled people need to be protected, pitied and patronized.

Inspiration porn - People with disabilities become objects of inspiration instead of subjects with their own story.

Closing Prayer

Creator God, we are your people. We look to the future with optimism and with faith in You, as we pursue our call to provide justice and fullness of life for all people with disabilities. We pray that every man, woman and child may develop their potential and meet You in themselves and in one another. Help us to remove ableism in our church and to be a more inclusive place for all people.

Amen

Adapted from <http://ncpd.org>>prayers