

Who is Sarah?

Two Perspectives of Viewing Persons with Disabilities

Sarah as viewed through a “LIMITATIONS” PERSPECTIVE

- ~ Sarah is thought of primarily in terms of her disability, that is, paraplegic, blind, deaf, cerebral palsy or retarded. Sarah is viewed as a liability, as having a deficit and, as such is “weak,” “broken,” or “lacking.”
- ~ Sarah is “different,” someone an able-bodied person cannot relate to.
- ~ Sarah is a “burden,” a “needy person.”
- ~ Sarah needs to be taken care of, to be “fixed,” and for others to advocate and protect her.
- ~ Sarah is pitied and patronized.
- ~ Sarah needs services or programs related to her disabling condition. She is not capable of participating in regular activities/events.
- ~ Sarah has limited life experiences and thus can’t make decisions or have insights that would benefit others.
- ~ keeps Sarah “hidden” or uninvolved in the life of the congregation.
- ~ leads to feelings of frustration because the church must “cater to Sarah.” This catering feels costly and time consuming. At best Sarah’s participation is tolerated.

Sarah as viewed through a “GIFTEDNESS” PERSPECTIVE

- ~ Sarah is thought of primarily in terms of her character and personality; as someone who also happens to use a wheelchair, assistive speaking device, etc. Sarah is made in the image of God and is an asset to her community. She cannot hide her vulnerabilities as many other people can.
- ~ Sarah is “more like everyone else than Different.” She has similar hopes and dreams for her life as able-bodied people.
- ~ Sarah is a unique and valued person who has skills and contributions to make. She desires opportunities in which she can make a difference.
- ~ Sarah is able to speak for herself and be a self-advocate. She is also interdependent and involved with others in giving and receiving relationships. Her caring relationships provide a “safety net.”
- ~ Sarah is affirmed for who she is, listened to and encouraged to help others understand the world from her perspective.
- ~ Sarah is capable of relationships, social involvements and enriching experiences like everyone else.
- ~ Sarah has some different and unique experiences that give her wisdom and expertise in areas few able-bodied people have.
- ~ promotes Sarah’s participation and aids in removing barriers to her full participation.
- ~ understands that Sarah deserves reasonable accommodation and that moving at Sarah’s pace is a blessing in this fast-paced world. Sarah’s participation is enjoyed.