

the truth. Specifically, we work toward an understanding of the wonderful work of Christian covenant instruction. Certainly, this experience has been a great opportunity for us to grow as well. We learn every day. We are convinced that God is using our work here. We are grateful to Him for His mercies to us.

I would love to tell you about the communion of the saints we experience with the Bible Presbyterian Church in Larne. Space permits me to say only that we have been able to strengthen each other as fellow Reformed believers. Our stay here would be nearly impossible without the care and love of these saints.

Our work here has been an adventure. But, it is much more. It is an opportunity to help God's people in another part of the world. We pray that God may continue to use us.

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How Do We Help the Learning Disabled?

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The major responsibility for learning disabled children lies with the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher will evaluate and develop an educational program for the learning disabled child by developing a classroom strategy that will make it possible for him to be successful.

I. What is a Learning Disability?

Learning disability can include defects in specific skills necessary for reading, spelling, or calculating. Learning disability can also include a collection of maladaptive behaviors such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, distractibility, and poor concentration. It is a disability that interferes with the child's capacity to learn.

Learning disability excludes children who have learning problems that result from poor vision, faulty hearing, motor handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental disadvantage.

Learning disabled children can have an average or better than average intelligence, i.e., an IQ of 90 or above.

Learning disabled children exhibit great variability in their performance from task to task and from day to day. They excel at some activities and fail at others. Often a skill that seems solid one day is gone the next.

Some children with learning disabilities appear to progress quite normally through their early development. They may have difficulties with academic work and function well in other areas. Other children may lack readiness for kindergarten. They may have slowly developing language skills, have a high or low level of activity, have a short attention span, be less mature than others their age, be distractible, or be impulsive and disorganized. They also experience difficulty interacting with their peers.

II. How Can We Diagnose a Disability?

We must learn where the learning process breaks down for each child. A child may have poor auditory processing skills. He may have weak visual skills. He may have trouble organizing.

Some researchers attribute many learning disabilities to a defect in the way the information received through the senses is perceived and interpreted. Children with faulty visual discrimination do not observe fine distinctions between letters such as b/d or n/h. They skip words and lines when reading. They lose their place easily and omit questions on tests. With auditory problems the child has difficulty hearing differences between such letters and sounds as f/v or p/b, or words such as mat/map or sat/set. They omit letters in blends, and have difficulty distinguishing between short vowel sounds. They are poor listeners and find it hard to concentrate, especially when someone is talking nearby.

A disabled learner has difficulty with closure which permits one to synthesize sounds or visual symbols, i.e., to use the parts to make a whole. C-A-T should be perceived and read as cat. Capital A is not merely unrelated lines.

Memory plays an essential part in learning. Many children with learning problems have difficulty recalling. They forget a math concept if it is in a different format. They read a word correctly; then fail to recognize it three lines later.

Learning disabled children often have language disorders as well. They may not comprehend word meanings, vocabulary usage, and sentence formation. They say "the thing you cut with" for *knife*, or "a story you say with clues to make people guess" instead of *riddle*.

III. Some Teaching Strategies That Work

1. Identify the child's strong learning channel. Children who have difficulty processing what they hear benefit from seeing. Write on the board. If they have visual problems, they need to have it told to them.
2. Provide structure. Help children to approach tasks in an organized sequential way. State expectation clearly.
3. Teach children to monitor their work — proofread.
4. Help children to focus on the problem. Make directions simple and short; specific and precise. Say, "Listen." Have children repeat what you have said.
5. Give children concrete objects to count and measure.
6. Keep it simple. Teach step by step. If 20 spelling words are too many, use fewer. Simplify your language and speak slowly.
7. Build self-esteem. Show children their progress. Give them different and special materials so their lag is not so obvious.
8. Give frequent reinforcement. Verbal reinforcement as well as a smile, nod, etc.
9. Modify requirements and make adjustments.
10. Help the child to decipher multi-meaning words.
11. Give the child additional language experience. Example: A child reads a sentence, *The dog's coat was yellow*. He might picture a mutt with a yellow raincoat. He laughs hilariously, disturbs the class, is scolded and thought to be the class clown. You could make picture cards with different meanings to help him choose what makes sense.
12. Give clues. Example: In mathematics have cards with key words for subtraction, such as "difference," "remaining," "decrease," "how much left?" etc.
13. Motivate learning disabled students.

Summary

Often what is thought to be impossible turns out to be very possible. All too often parents and teachers have little or no expectations for learning disabled children, and as a result, these children give us what we expect — often nothing.

We as Christian teachers must be aware that each individual child entrusted to us for instruction is "God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Ephesians 2:10. Each covenant child is conceived and born in sin, yet redeemed by Christ's death and born again as a new creature in Christ. He has his own personality, character, and talents. We are called to prepare the individual child with all his weaknesses and disabilities for his own place in God's church and kingdom.

The disabled child must be taught to put his trust in God, to rely on Him, and to serve Him so that to God may be all the glory.

This is no small task. We must pray for wisdom and patience in dealing with these children of God.

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A Biblical View of the Responsibility of Parents in Education

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Recently the "Great Debate" has drawn attention to the parlous state of education in our country but, despite the contributions of politicians, educators, industry, the universities and colleges, etc., no clear policy has emerged. Anyone and everyone is prepared to speak and write at length on the subject for all have participated in one way or another and have their pennyworth to add. Acquisition of the basic skills (the three R's), vocational training, preparation for leisure and citizenship are glibly offered as educational aims and the very glibness of the presentation deceives many. But these are not educational aims: they are simply a recognition of the various facets of existence in a modern society; a passive acceptance of the status quo but taking no cognisance whatever of a meaning and purpose in life. They are descriptive not formative. We shall look in vain to the philosophers, the educational theorists, psychologists, curriculum builders, and government appointed committees; there are reams of educational jargon and hundreds of "in" words to confuse and repel any parent who may wish to find out what is happening to his children, but no one can define "education" for no one can tell us what is the meaning and purpose of life.

No one, that is, except the Author of Life Himself, Who simply and clearly stated, "This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Even more succinctly He declared, "I am. . .the Life." And speaking of the purpose of His incarnation, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have