

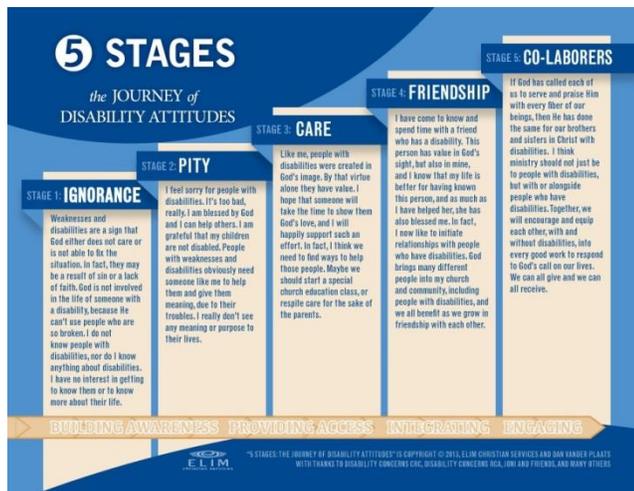


Changing Attitudes

5 Stages: The Journey of Disability Attitudes

The metaphor of journey is one way to describe the attitudes we hold toward persons with disabilities. Our attitudes are capable of change as we journey through life. Stages in the journey of disability attitudes are fluid, and we may move back and forth between them, depending on current circumstances.

Dan Vander Plaats of Elim Christian Services outlines five stages that often characterize the journey of disability attitudes. Pictured below is his one-page tool for sparking conversation with others in your congregation.



We can find each of the five stages of the journey within the biblical stories of God's people. We need not feel bad if our journey has just begun. If we find ourselves in one of the first four stages, **another stage in the journey beckons** to us, inviting us to take a step toward stronger relationships with people with disabilities and deeper awareness of their indispensable place in the body of Christ. Spending time with someone who has a disability is vital when we want to move to the next stage in the journey.

We introduce the 5 Stages here and encourage you to visit the websites in the resources section to learn more. There you can access videos and colorful handouts.

Stage 1: Ignorance

People have disabilities because they lack faith or they are being punished for sin. I am uncomfortable around people with disabilities and try to avoid them. They are not my responsibility.

Two blind men were sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet. Matt. 20:30-31

Stage 2: Pity

People with disabilities are needy and I feel sorry for them. Someone should help them and give their lives meaning. But, thank God, no one in my family has a disability.

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. Psalm 72:12-13

Stage 3: Care

Like me, people with disabilities were created in God's image; for this reason their lives have value. I hope that someone will take the time to show them God's love. I will happily support such an effort.

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matt. 25:40.

Stage 4: Friendship

I have come to know and spend time with a friend who has a disability. My friend has value in God's sight, but also in mine. My life is better for knowing my friend, and she has blessed me as much as I have helped her. I am learning to accept and love my own limitations.

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. 1 Cor. 1:27

Stage 5: Co-Laborers

People with disabilities are co-laborers in God's kingdom, sharing ministry gifts needed by the body of Christ. Together, we who live with disabilities and we who have no apparent disability are encouraging and equipping each other in every good work.

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." John 9:3

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Resource Suggestions

The 5 Stages website: www.the5stages.com

Elim Christian Services: www.elimcs.org

5 Stages PowerPoint: www.adnetonline.org/5stages

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