

Welcoming the Child with Special Needs to Your Sunday School Class

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Over 54 million Americans have disabilities. Chances are you will probably have a child with special needs visit your class.

Before the child arrives

Visit the home. Meet the child. Learn of strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes. Talk with the parents about special accommodations that might be needed.

Working as a team

Having an additional teacher in the classroom is necessary to help with adaptations and keeping the child on task. A child must learn about Jesus in the way he learns. Adaptations should be adjustments, not major overhauls. Allow them to do everything they can on their own and fill in only the missing pieces.

Nurturing Acceptance

Addressing special needs, instead of ignoring them will help melt away that fear of the unknown the other children may be experiencing. Have children in your Sunday School class share things they do well and things they find difficult. Lead the children in scripture and discussion pointing out that we all have "Special Needs". Share that Johnny has a very good memory but might need help with activities he does with his hands. "Buddies" can volunteer when a little extra help is needed.

Watch for Language

Avoid labeling the child "special" or by their disability, i.e. the autistic boy. Resentment may cause another child to say, "Hey, what about me? I'm special, too!"

Attitude is contagious

Children pick up on the teacher's attitude toward the child with special needs, and react accordingly. You have a choice. Your attitude may communicate inconvenience or lack of acceptance. Instead, choose to set the example of unconditional love as Jesus did. The children will follow your example. Remember that we all have special needs and words of encouragement can change a life.