

Training for Small Groups & House Churches with Adults with Varied Abilities

A resource initiated by Barbara J. Newman, created by the Circle of Congregations, an initiative of

ALL BELONG CENTER FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Forward

Being a part of a small group or house church is an excellent way to engage in a faith-growing community. For people with varied abilities, it can be challenging to engage fully. As leaders, it can be daunting to have group members with life experiences, behaviors or needs you are unfamiliar with. Training and church leadership for small groups and house churches may not prepare your group in all the ways that would help a group to thrive.

This training module is designed to equip everyone in a small group or house church to welcome, include, support and receive from people with varying abilities.

Notice that some sessions are specifically for leaders and/or mentors (you'll see this indicated in the title of the sessions). Many are for everyone and can be used as initial or annual sessions group members participate in, so that everyone has a common ground on which to stand in the group. Everyone may learn from the sessions designated for leaders, but they are designed specifically to address group leaders.

The sessions are meant to take about 20-30 minutes each. You may choose to go through the entire training module in one day as a leadership group, or to have each session as a portion of your regular small group or house church meeting for several weeks. Use them however they best suit the needs of your leaders, group members and community.

Parts 1, 2, and 3 contain sessions for your group that are composed of a video, an exercise to do together, and additional resources you may want to explore. Part 4 is a set of very brief videos and lists of tips organized by various differences you may encounter in individuals participating in your group. You could explore all of part 4 as one session, or you could include one or more of the areas at the end of each session you do from parts 1, 2, and 3. You will find a way that works for your group. Just don't forget those tips, resources and ideas are here to help you better build belonging for people with varied abilities in your group.

Part 1: Becoming A Group Where Each One Belongs

Belonging for All (For Everyone)

Video: [Puzzle Piece perspective](#), found at vimeo.com/540229688 (3:15)

Exercise:

- ❖ Do the Puzzle Piece Activity as a group. Instructions and puzzle pieces can be found in the [Inclusion Awareness Kit](#).
- ❖ OR, use Dr. Carter's [reflection tool found at](#) to discuss belonging for all in this group.

Resources:

- ❖ [Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship](#) by Barbara J. Newman (in which the puzzle piece is also described and resources for group activity are also available in Appendix A)
- ❖ Erik Carter's graphics on belonging and [a reflection tool](#) (PDF)

To explore more fully the 10 Dimensions of belonging, see the Sermon Series and other resources on allbelong.org/coc.

Learning How to Love One Another (For Everyone)

Video: Speaking your native "language" - [Jolene Philo describes the love languages](#), found at youtube.com/watch?v=cxllP_2LhWU&t=115s. (Play to 13:12; total run time 11:17)

Exercise: [Take the quiz](#) to see your native language. Get to know one another's languages! (Choose Couples, Singles, Teens or Children version based on what works best for you)

Resources:

- ❖ Watch the rest of the video with Jolene Philo to learn more!
- ❖ *Sharing Love Abundantly in Special Needs Families: The 5 Love Languages for Parents Raising Children with Disabilities...* by Gary Chapman and Jolene Philo

Learning About an Individual (For Everyone)

Video: [Barbara J. Newman on asking the right questions](https://vimeo.com/567109401), found at vimeo.com/567109401. (8:40)

Exercise: Each person in the group fill out the “[Get to Know Me](#)” page from *Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship* (p. 86–87), found at allbelong.org/media/Appendix-A_puzzle-piece.pdf. Discuss what you learned about each other.

Resources:

- ❖ [Accessible Gospel, Inclusive Worship](#) by Barbara J. Newman
- ❖ [Your Feet, My Shoes](#) by Sarah Bolt –with activity ideas for trying out activities the way a person with differing abilities may experience them.
- ❖ Individuals!
- ❖ The above video is from a course produced by All Belong's church services, which is available through the [Christian Leaders Institute](https://christianleadersinstitute.org) at moodle.christianleadersinstitute.org/course/view.php?id=1096

Part 2: Physical Safety

What a Group Should Know About Medical Diagnoses (For Everyone)

Video: [Victoria White on knowing enough to build belonging](https://vimeo.com/596799956) found at vimeo.com/596799956 (4:51)

Exercise: Give each person a diagnosis with information about it on a card to share their given “medical diagnosis”(you can print off these cards, found at allbelong.org/media/diagnosis-cards.pdf or make your own). Have each group member discuss what familiarity they have with that diagnosis and how to prepare space for an individual with that diagnosis in faith community. Consider: What does that word make you think about? What is helpful for the group to know about this? Why?

Resources:

- ❖ [Does My Child Have PTSD?](#) By Jolene Philo

- ❖ Blog post on sharing diagnosis publicly: lupusnewstoday.com/2020/08/07/sharing-my-diagnosis-social-media-going-public/
- ❖ Blog on life with Lyme disease: victoryandlyme.wordpress.com/about/
- ❖ Blog post on sharing the journey: specialneedsparenting.net/your-secret-or-your-story/

Planning for What-Ifs (For Leaders)

Video: [Victoria White on “What if...?”](https://vimeo.com/596799956) found at vimeo.com/596799956 (3:41)

Exercise: Bring out the diagnosis cards used in the last session. Lay them out. If there are other situations that cause you to wonder “what if” regarding your group, write them on index cards and add them to the cards. Set a timer for 15 minutes. In that time, pick up the cards that cause you as a leader to be concerned about “what ifs”, discuss them, pray about them, and write down a sentence for each about what you will do if an emergency arises.

Resources:

- ❖ CDC’s Disability & Health Emergency Preparedness page, cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/emergencypreparedness.html
- ❖ Fire Safety for People with Disabilities: nps.gov/articles/p52-fire-safety-for-people-with-disabilities.htm
- ❖ Emergency Preparedness Guide for People with Disabilities: getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/pplwthdsblts/index-en.aspx

Working with Challenging Behaviors (For Leaders, Buddies/Mentors)

Video: [A new approach -interview with Dr. Greene](https://youtu.be/P14zWfIzuFU) found at youtu.be/P14zWfIzuFU (6:02)

Exercise:

- ❖ Imagine together two scenarios:
 1. A child grows up being punished for bad behavior and is now in your small group.
 2. A child grows up with proactive, collaborative problem-solving to meet expectations and is now in your small group.
- ❖ Using the [Relationship Matrix](#) (otherwise called the Social Discipline Window, found at iirp.edu/images/socialDisc_window.png), point to which section these experiences fit.

❖ Discuss:

1. Do you fit into one of these scenarios?
2. How do you want this group to function regarding behavior expectations? (Within which section of the Relationship Matrix would you like this group to operate?)
3. What expectations do you have as a group?
4. How will you all collaborate to meet those expectations, and include someone in that process who may bring challenging behaviors as they participate in the group?

Video: clip from Tiffany Crow's "[How Well Can You Take a Hit](https://vimeo.com/266404440#t=550s)" found at vimeo.com/266404440#t=550s (Stop at 17:09 for total run time 8:00)

Discuss: Consider what Tiffany shared about turning the other cheek, and about behaviors in context. What does this group need to know to properly frame the behaviors of group members who may have a disability that sometimes reveals itself in strong behaviors?

Resources:

- ❖ The rest of Tiffany Crow's video
- ❖ Dr. Ross Greene's website: livesinthebalance.org/parents-families
- ❖ The [IIRP website on Restorative Practices: iirp.edu/restorative-practices/defining-restorative/](https://iirp.edu/restorative-practices/defining-restorative/)

Part 3: Emotional Safety

Respecting Opinions in the Group (for Everyone)

Video: [Disagreeing without being disagreeable -3 A's approach](https://youtu.be/nGldHFz_8Co) found at youtu.be/nGldHFz_8Co (2:17)

Exercise:

- ❖ Make up a disagreement to discuss
 1. Write topics that have at least two distinct "sides" on papers and put those in a bowl or hat. Someone pick one of the papers and read it. (For group members who will struggle to do this, allow them to speak their topic and another person act as secretary to write it).
 2. Two volunteers each take one side of the topic. One person makes a statement and the other disagrees, using the 3 A's approach. Then the first person uses the 3 A's approach to respond.
 3. Repeat as many times as the group would like.

Resources:

- ❖ Scripture verses and teaching on conflict resolution from the Denver Institute: denverinstitute.org/the-process-of-biblical-conflict-resolution/
- ❖ Restorative Questions for handling conflict: iirp.edu/news/time-to-think-using-restorative-questions

Mental Health First Aid (For Everyone)

Video: support for mental health challenges

1. [Dr. Swinton on Mental Health challenges and the church's role](https://vimeo.com/546562885) found at vimeo.com/546562885 (5:06)
2. Crossroads church's Dr. Nikki Instone shares some FAQ's on [the basics of mental health](https://crossroads.net/media/videos/the-basics-of-mental-health) challenges found at crossroads.net/media/videos/the-basics-of-mental-health (3:45)
3. (optional) [Dr. Grcevich on Practical tips, Mental health education and support, and the church being responsible to minister well](https://vimeo.com/255162038) found at vimeo.com/255162038 (11:11)

Exercise: As a group, discuss the following scenario: Susan (18) has been struggling to manage her depression. She shares with her small group leader that she feels if something happened to her no one would miss her. She also states she often thinks of driving into a lake so no one will have to worry about her and her depression. How would you respond? What should you do?

Resources:

- ❖ *Finding Jesus in the Storm: The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges*, by Dr. John Swinton
- ❖ *Mental Health and the Church*, by Dr. Steve Grcevich
- ❖ mentalhealthfirstaid.org/
- ❖ Resources on allbelong.org, including this [Well-being survey](https://allbelong.org/media/Well-Being-survey-1.pdf), found at allbelong.org/media/Well-Being-survey-1.pdf (adapted from [Panorama's student well-being survey](https://go.panoramaed.com/offer/well-being-survey), found at go.panoramaed.com/offer/well-being-survey)
- ❖ *The Mindful Christian*, by Dr. Irene Kraegel and webinar hosted by All Belong, found at allbelong.org/home/covid-19-resources/

To explore more in-depth the areas of mental health challenges and how to address them, see allbelong.org/coc for a 7-session series on mental health loaded with other resources.

What a Group Should Know About Trauma (For Everyone)

Video: Betsy Winkle, School Psychologist on [Basic trauma awareness](https://youtu.be/F_bAtC8bOLk?t=15) found at youtu.be/F_bAtC8bOLk?t=15 (Stop at 6:54 for total run time 6:39)

Exercise: These four reactions to trauma are common. As a group, try to create a pose or hand-signal for each. Everyone signal/show the one that you tend to utilize most.

- ❖ **Fight:** Outbursts, talking back, Provoking others
- ❖ **Flight:** Head down, leaving class, daydream
- ❖ **Freeze:** Blank stare, avoids tasks, doesn't answer questions
- ❖ **Fawn (befriend threats):** People pleasing, perfectionism, makes friends with bullies

Resources:

- ❖ Continue watching the webinar with Betsy Winkle from All Belong
- ❖ TED Talk: How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime. By Harris Burke: youtube.com/watch?v=95ovIJ3dsNk&t=6s.
- ❖ *Does My Child Have PTSD?* By Jolene Philo
- ❖ Restorative Practices: iirp.edu/restorative-practices/what-is-restorative-practices

What a Group Should Know About Family Violence (For Everyone)

Video: [Early Signs of Domestic Violence with Dr. Angela Riggsbee](https://youtube.com/watch?v=sVcxoPI1fdU), found at youtube.com/watch?v=sVcxoPI1fdU (3:38)

Exercise: Consider this scenario: Tim is the primary care giver of his adult son Bob who has autism. Bob is nonverbal and Tim has been trying for several weeks to teach him a new skill. In small group, the leader notices that Bob has a large bruise shaped as a handprint. What should the group do?

Read these signs together to be familiar with them: areyouok.org.nz/i-want-to-help/what-are-the-signs/.

Resources:

- ❖ Information on elder/adult with disability abuse and how to report it: mifa.org/elderabuse
- ❖ Information about safety training and risk of violence for people with disabilities: napsa-now.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Safety-Training.pdf

When & How to Direct a Group Participant to Professionals (For Leaders)

Video: [A Pastor's perspective on referring to counseling](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=369920540806958), found at [facebook.com/watch/?v=369920540806958](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=369920540806958) (1:53)

Exercise: Print and cut out [these scenario cards](#). Take turns drawing a card, and as a group decide if the scenario could be addressed within the group (in-house) through prayer, talking and other support, or if the person should see a counselor/professional (call out).

Optional: Use “house” (in-house) and “phone” (call out) cards as a way to indicate which is the best option for the scenario. Or, place the “house” and “phone” cards in different parts of the room. When a scenario is identified as one or the other, place it with the “house” or the “phone”.

Resources:

- ❖ Church and Mental health [website article on referring someone to counseling](#) (with things the group can do to support the individual and the counseling process!): churchandmentalhealth.com/how-can-pastors-refer-someone-to-counseling/
- ❖ [This Guide](#) for when and how to support someone through a referral to professional help: allbelong.org/media/Referring-to-counseling-guidelines.pdf
- ❖ Resources from the sections on mental health, trauma, and family violence.

Part 4: Understanding and Adapting for Specific Needs

Knowing and Adapting for Needs in the Group (For Leaders)

This section is made up of Videos and written tips which are available on and taken from TogetherSmallGroups.org. If your group would like more assistance in these areas, All Belong's church consultants would love to talk with you! After you watch the short videos, discuss the tips you think would be helpful to try in your group. Review these as often as is helpful, or when your group welcomes in someone new who may have a difference in one of these areas. These are tips and ideas, but remember: always get to know the person and learn from them what is most helpful and how best they participate!

Hearing

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237568195) found at vimeo.com/237568195 (2:08)

Tips:

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best present information to fit that person's hearing needs (sign language interpreter, wearing a microphone that is wired in to the individual's hearing aid, closed captioning, meeting in a room with a hearing loop, and so on). Remember that hearing differences can range from people being completely without hearing to having partial hearing loss in one or both ears. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Seating and positioning are important. Provide a seat where the individual can see the face and lips of the primary speaker. If one ear is more impacted than the other, make sure the ear with more hearing is toward the speaker.
3. Technology can be very helpful. Connecting the group presentation to the individual's iPad, tablet, or other personal device allows the individual to enable the accessibility features on the device.
4. If the individual is a reader, remember to pair written words with spoken words as much as possible.
5. Some individuals with hearing aids struggle with background noise. Keeping the group noise level down or providing a quiet place to talk

with a discussion partner can be helpful. Also, remind group members to speak clearly, keeping fingers and other objects away from their mouths when speaking.

6. Remember that hearing is only one way to access information. Seeing, tasting, smelling, and touching are also helpful ways for people to participate.

Vision

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237569368) found at vimeo.com/237569368 (1:59)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and ask how you can best present information to fit that person's vision needs (Braille, large print, color contrast, and so on). Remember that vision differences can range from people being completely without sight to having partial vision or vision perception differences. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. If information is presented in a visual way, such as with presentation slides or a video clip, include a verbal narrative of what is being presented. Either speak the narrative to the whole group or ask someone to sit beside the individual with vision challenges to provide a one-on-one translation of the material.
3. If an activity incorporates physical movement, consider pairing the individual with another person so that they can move as a team.
4. Be aware that moving furniture or standard items in the room can cause difficulties for people with visual differences. Make sure the individual is aware that some items have been moved and offer a guided tour around the room for that person's benefit.
5. Technology can be very helpful. Connecting the group presentation to the individual's iPad, tablet, or other personal device allows the individual to change the image size or background color and to enable the accessibility features on the device.
6. [YouVersion](#) is a free app that features many great choices for Bible readers with visual differences. For example, on web-enabled devices

an icon allows the individual to access an audio version of Scripture passages.

7. Providing written or presentation materials electronically and in advance allows people with a Braille printer or screen reader to run off the material prior to the meeting. Some individuals enjoy making their own large-print or color, contrast copies in advance.
8. Remember that vision is only one way to take in information. Hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching are also helpful ways for people to participate.

Speaking

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237569191) found at vimeo.com/237569191 (2:24)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person's speaking needs (understand how the individual may use sign language or gestures, written words, pictures, a communication device; give a yes/no response; and so on). Remember that speaking differences do not indicate how the person takes information in. For example, a person who has had a stroke may struggle with pronouncing spoken words, but that individual may understand every word that is spoken by others. Another individual may have fluent speech but very little understanding of words that others speak. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Give unhurried attention to a person who has difficulty speaking. Do not finish sentences for him or her.
3. The lessons in these units often provide picture options so that individuals can point to a picture as a way to give an answer. If the individual has difficulty pointing but is able to look at a picture, simply cut the pictures apart and place them on the corners of a larger piece of paper. The person can then use a directed gaze to select a picture.
4. If an individual uses a communication device, it's important to learn how it works. By giving an individual or their guardian advance

information, it's possible to enter many of the words or pictures the individual might need to meaningfully enter into a discussion.

5. Ask for a response that requires a gesture or movement for an answer instead of a spoken word. People with speech differences can give a head nod or shake, give a thumbs up or thumbs down response, or hold up a written response on a notecard or small whiteboard.

Movement

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237568319) found at vimeo.com/237568319 (2:05)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person's movement needs (understand the body parts that work well and those that have limited movement; learn about the equipment, tools, or procedures the individual is already using, such as a wheelchair, special chair, or braces for arms and legs; know the protocol for assisting someone who is having a seizure; and so on). Remember that movement differences do not indicate the way the person takes information in. An individual may be a fluent reader, have a typical or high IQ, and also have voluntary control of eye movements only. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Make sure your meeting space is accessible and allows for the individual to participate in all activities. Have you done an accessibility audit of your facility? See a few options on allbelong.org/for-churches/roles (click on Facility/Maintenance Crew Member). Consider looking through your facility together with this individual as you assess which areas will work well and which areas may cause concern.
3. If an activity requires a motor response that is challenging for this person, consider using a discussion partner to complete the portion of the activity that is difficult while allowing the individual to participate as fully as possible.
4. Make sure the bathrooms and drinking fountains in your meeting space can accommodate the needs of each individual present.

5. Make activity substitutions as needed. If the activity asks a person to walk, change the response to pointing or telling.
6. Watch your own wording. If you say, “Everyone please stand,” you have eliminated some people from following these instructions. If you say, “Everyone please rise in body or in spirit,” each person can participate.
7. Some individuals have emergency plans. It’s important for at least one person in attendance to know that plan. Having it written down and accessible to the group is helpful should an emergency happen during your time together.

Sensory Processing

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237568622) found at vimeo.com/237568622 (2:48)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person’s sensory processing needs. Remember that many individuals with disabilities have some kind of sensory difference. Some people’s sensory systems are wired to be extra-sensitive to sounds, touch, smells, or tastes. It’s important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Once you discover the sensory difference, consider your group’s environment. If you have an individual, for example, who struggles with certain sounds or desires a quieter environment, think about your setting and what might present difficulties. Think about ways to offer more predictable noises and a quieter setting.
3. Some individuals have equipment that is helpful. Make sure they have access to those items in your setting. Some may need an item with weights in it, such as a weighted vest or ankle or wrist weights. Some may need a coffee stirrer to hold or a special necklace to chew on. Some may benefit from sitting on an exercise ball instead of a chair. Learn what works in other settings and then have those items available in your setting.
4. Don’t judge someone’s sensory responses by comparing them to your own responses. Saying, “That noise is not loud” may be true for you,

but that individual may perceive the same sound as being very loud. Remember, every sensation is interpreted by an individual's brain. Consider a person with sensory processing differences to be speaking the truth from his or her perspective.

Social Skills

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237568968) found at vimeo.com/237568968 (3:29)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person's social skills needs. Does this person avoid social settings, make social errors, become visibly upset with others, or struggle with anxiety? It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Some people benefit from having a sneak peek at your setting and knowing what to expect. Consider using your website to offer pictures or a video tour of the room(s) where you will meet, giving examples of some of the activities a person may do, and sharing names and photos of the leaders. Some people may enjoy having a tour of the area when only the leader and a trusted peer are present. The person may want to choose and reserve a seat, experience a portion of the materials, and possibly take home an item that will be used during the first time together. Others may appreciate receiving in advance the agenda for the meeting so they will know what will take place and in what order.
3. Consider providing ways to practice social skills if an individual is making errors. If, for example, someone continually interrupts the speaker, practice raising a hand or holding up a card in order to get the speaker's attention. If someone's voice volume is too loud for the setting, consider teaching a range for sound similar to that on a remote control. Practice speaking at different volume levels and request that voice volume be "at a 3" for a given activity.
4. Once again, technology can be a wonderful asset. It's possible for people to join you remotely through Skype or other computer applications. People can be part of a group without having to experience the anxiety of physically being present. Some people may begin in this way but opt to be physically present as they get to know the format and the people who are part of this setting.

5. Every lesson gives an option for putting together a picture and word sequence of events. Some individuals appreciate having this information in front of them and will be more willing to attend an event with this guide in place.
6. In some cases, you may need to give information we typically don't provide to other adults. Information such as "This group requires people to shower before attending" or "This prayer request time allows people to give one prayer request each week" might be helpful information for certain individuals. Make sure you have done your job of gathering information before you choose this option.

Reading

[Video](https://vimeo.com/237568458) found at vimeo.com/237568458 (2:21)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person's reading needs. Reading differences can include reading no words, to reading limited words or phrases, to reading at a lower reading level, to reading fluently but being unable to comprehend what is read. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Provide equipment and strategies that might allow this individual to read some of the material. Having a device or computer that offers a text-to-voice option can help many. Offering tools that alter the background color behind the text is also a strategy some appreciate. Preparing and practicing the reading passage ahead of time can be helpful. Learn what works for this person in another setting and apply it to your setting.
3. Use your discussion partners as reading partners. While one person may be doing the reading, both can discuss the information together using words or pictures.
4. For an individual who struggles to comprehend, pair words with visuals and discussion points. The materials prepared for these lessons offer many ways that people can see as well as hear. Take full advantage of these tools.

5. [YouVersion](#) is a free app that features many great choices for Bible users with reading differences. For example, on web-enabled devices an icon allows the individual to access an audio version of Scripture passages.

Writing

[Video](#) found at vimeo.com/237569482 (2:24)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person's writing needs. Writing differences can include writing no words, to tracing key words, to copying words, to writing some words or phrases, to writing at a lower level than expected for the person's age. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Provide a word bank for those able to copy words.
3. Have words paired with pictures on stickers and invite the individual put the appropriate sticker on the paper instead of writing a word in a blank. Address labels work well for this.
4. Pair the individual with a discussion partner and have that person serve as a "secretary," writing down the words of the individual.
5. Have the individual and his or her discussion partner share one piece of paper by putting both names on it and having one person do the writing. A great rule to make is that they must discuss the answer before writing it down.
6. Provide equipment that might make writing easier, such as speech-to-text technology, specialized pencils, computers, or raised-lined paper. Find out what that person already uses and then make it available in your setting.

Severe to Profound Differences in Intellectual Disability

[Video](#) found at vimeo.com/237568810 (2:45)

Tips

1. Find out more about the individual and how you can best provide tools to fit that person's understanding needs. Discovering what this person *can* do and what this person enjoys can be a great place to start. Knowing, for example, that music always brings a smile is important as you plan your time together. It's important to gather this information before identifying solutions.
2. Find out what equipment or tools this person is already using. Having the same communication tool available or knowing some of the signs or gestures this person uses can be helpful in adapting the materials.
3. Discover an activity that the individual enjoys and make sure you always do that as part of your meeting time. If the person enjoys looking at pictures of dogs, make sure you weave that into every meeting time together. If the individual enjoys rocking in a rocking chair, have one in your meeting room. If the person enjoys a good back massage, find a discussion partner with the skill of giving a massage.
4. Don't assume that you know what and how much this individual is learning. Be faithful in presenting information in multisensory ways. Allow God to use these tools to speak to that person. Remember, God has made so many accommodations so that you can have a relationship with him. Scripture is filled with pictures of God having a face and hands and voice so that you can better relate to him. If God will do that for you, God will also do that for your group member who may need different kind of accommodations. Be faithful and do your part of including and welcoming each individual. Then trust God to speak to everyone present in a voice that is modified for each one.
5. Look through some of the other helpful tips provided here, since this person may have challenges in speaking, reading, writing, and other areas.
6. Offer respect by using words and actions appropriate for a person that age. Speaking to a person who is 55 years old as if he or she were a baby is not appropriate. All adults should be respected and welcomed as such.