

David C. Deuel & Nathan G. John, eds., *Disability in Mission: The Church's Hidden Treasure*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2019. 167 pages. \$19.95 ISBN 9781683072010

Elena Down was a pioneer missionary through her disability and “foreign hero” with disability in mission. She worked as a volunteer at my uncle and auntie’s Nambikkai Project for the Deaf in rural India. Nathan John dedicated this book in memory of Elena Down and her missionary works powerfully in mission through disability. Nathan John has been a mentor to quite a few Engage Disability Network over the years (myself included).

Disability in Mission’s sub-title gives a fascinating blueprint of the substance of the book, *The Church’s Hidden Treasure*. This book is an intimate and personal account of Nathan John and his family’s journey of following Jesus in a life of their first child was born with a profound disability. Living with profound disabled daughter was their sharing of the paschal mystery of Jesus in their lives: Nathan John says in his own words “Our eight years after this brokenness, his spiritual growth and ministry impact have come from his experience of disability, vulnerability and pain. Just one example is the establishment of an India-wide movement for disability inclusion in the church called Engage Disability” (p.4).

It is his vulnerability that is the stuff of this book and people with disability may appear radical, even reckless, to some. From their experience with the disability will “1) inspire those with disabilities and vulnerabilities to seek to be involved in ministry; 2) inspire churches and communities around them to facilitate their ministry; and 3) embolden the church to think beyond God working in spite of our disability, towards, acknowledging that God intends to work powerfully through our disability ” (p.7).

Disability in Mission says, “that disability-inclusive missions give significant open doors provide for disability ministry in the twenty-first century.” One of the most compelling opportunities defined in the book is best outlined in Paul’s words, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us ” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Nathan John and David Deuel take a giant step forward in mission studies-which highlights how people with disabilities have participated in the *missio Dei* (Mission of God) to God’s ongoing redemptive mission in the world. In Chapters 1 and 2, David Deuel plots the crossing point of disability and scriptural shortcoming by giving instances of characters like Moses, Paul and Isaiah. God utilizes shortcoming to show his glory and power. David Deuel brings up that we are just stewards of the blessings, abilities and disabilities we have, called by God to utilize them for his glory alone. God is making and developing His kingdom through the weakness of the mediator since His power can fill them.

Chapters 3–10 contain narratives of God’s people serving on the mission field. They bring God glory, notwithstanding their disability however through it. The gospel truth that God utilizes the weak, feeble and helpless things of the world to shame the wise, and that brokenness is an essential for serving God, is plainly portrayed. Considering the *Imago Dei*, (Image of God) “if there is no degradation of the image of God as such, then there is no degradation in the role of a member of the body of Christ who has a disability” (p.123).

Many cultures view disability as something to be embarrassed and think of it as a sign of a curse. But in so many situations, God has used His people who experience disability to bring about change. God utilized Anna, Bonnie’s daughter who has Down syndrome, to guide Indonesians to the source of all hope, who gives generously for His children (p.42). In my case, God chose me to do disability mission work after development of mother’s physical disability to use most powerfully for his Glory and kingdom building.

Disability in Mission is a book that will inspire mission agencies, churches, and Christians to change their understanding and include people with disabilities in mission, but especially people considering ministry, local or cross-cultural. It strikes at the core of the Christian's identity and reason by letting the reader 'a chance to listen in' as missionaries share with trustworthiness and brokenness their direct experience of suffering with disability. Jeff McNair's chapter paints the excellent scene of a short-term mission trip that would communicate a ground-breaking message to the team made up of people with disabilities and people without disabilities (p.150).

Disability in Mission has a simple yet deep message, that God looks at the heart, not the outside things that we people so often esteem. He takes all our weakness and makes it into something beautiful all together that his glory might shine forth. This book represents a paradigm shift for the medical community. Every medical missionary must read this book. It is a great book to not just for people who are interested about disability in mission but for all pastors and ministry leaders. I profoundly prescribe this book.

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