

The Power of Those Who Seem Weaker

People with Disabilities in the Church

J E F F M C N A I R, P H . D .

Disability Studies, California Baptist University
Policy Center, Christian Institute on Disability

ABSTRACT

This article considers the indispensable nature of those who seem weaker expressed in 1 Corinthians 12:22 and applies the idea as a parallel allusion to persons with disabilities within the Body of Christ. References are made to Paul's connection of power to weakness and people perceived as weak whether real or not. The reader is encouraged to consider the inclusion of those perceived to be weaker into the church because their presence is described as indispensable to the church.

Keywords: *power, power in weakness, inclusion of persons with disabilities, 1 Corinthians 12:22*

Jeff McNair is Professor of Special Education/Disability Studies at California Baptist University, directs the Policy Center for the CID, and along with his wife, Kathi, facilitates the Light and Power Company, a local church ministry which includes adults with disabilities.

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On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable” (1 Corinthians 12:22).

There are at least two aspects of power being alluded to in this brief passage. The first part mentions “those parts of the body that seem to be weaker.” This implies that there are those who are being observed (seem weaker) and those who are observing (seem stronger). When considering who would seem weaker, one might think of people with disabilities. Their impairments may impact their intellect, emotions, skill sets or physical functioning. If I seem stronger, perhaps that means that I am perceived as not impacted by the above. I might also be provided with opportunities to express my gifting. I am seen as being self-sufficient, or independent as opposed to those who are thought of as weaker: potentially needing people to support them just to live. There may also be a utilitarian component that goes along with being perceived as weaker. That is, I seem weaker in that people have looked at me to see what I may have to offer. I appear to be limited, so I seem weaker.

But Paul corrects those who seem stronger. At the start of verse 22, he says, “on the contrary,” implying correction, they only “seem” weaker indicating that those who seem stronger have their evaluation wrong. In their strength, they use their power to evaluate and label. But the most difficult aspect of this evaluation is the dismissal, exclusion and segregation which often follows. In the process, they prevent the reality of who people are from being displayed. It is like Vanier (1998) observes when he says, “There is a lack of synchronicity between our society and people with disabilities. A society that honors only the powerful, the clever, and the winners necessarily belittles the weak. It is as if to say: to be human is to be powerful” (p. 46).

One contribution of the field of disability studies is how it has taken on society’s dismissal of people with disabilities. “Devaluation is something that is done to another person by a perceiver” says Wolfensberger (1998, p. 3). Pothier & Devlin (2006) relate that power or powerlessness are the two key political insights that are the basis of critical disability theory. They state, “...issues of disability are not just questions of impairment, functional limitations, or enfeeblement; they are issues of social values, institutional priorities, and political will. They are questions of power: of who and what gets valued, and who and what gets marginalized” (p. 9). They go on to say, “The claim that disability is not just an individual impairment but a systematically enforced pattern of exclusion moves the analysis forward in

important ways” (p. 14). Niebuhr (1960) alluded to this ongoing power exchange, using the example of men and women.

In the long agitation which preceded suffrage reform, the men significantly used the same arguments against their own women, which privileged groups have always used in opposition to the extension of privilege. They insisted that women were not capable of exercising the rights to which they aspired, just as dominant classes have always tried to withhold the opportunity for the exercise of rational functions from underprivileged classes and then accused them of lacking capacities, which can be developed only by exercise (p. 46).

Meekosha & Shuttleworth (2009) note there “...is an agreement that disabled people are undervalued and discriminated against and this cannot be changed simply through liberal or neo-liberal legislation and policy” (p. 65).

Relationships and Loving One's Neighbor

It is arguable that only the development of relationships will lead to shared power. Entering into relationship implies relinquishing one's own power and allowing others to have power. It is through relationship that people who are indispensable express their indispensable nature. In reality, disability ministry has often gotten this wrong, in seeking to “work with” or develop “ministry to” rather than simply endeavoring to form relationships and experience how the power of relationships changes people, changes groups, and changes social environments. One cannot include and remain the same.

Disability ministry should be about inclusion and relationships. If my friend is in the hospital, I must visit the hospital. If my behavior, my time is not spent differently when he is in the hospital such that I visit him, then I am not being a friend. If I say I love you but am unwilling to be with you, in relationship with you, then I don't really love you. A church, therefore, cannot truly do disability ministry in a mature way and remain the same as it was before it began such a ministry. If disability ministry is a compartmentalized activity, it is at best immature. We will know as a church that we are probably not doing mature disability ministry unless we are compelled to change the way we do things. Probably the way we do most things, as to love people who do not fit into the ways things are currently designed, should cause us to change that design. It may go beyond the earlier statement from Niebuhr (1960) in that it is not just that people are thought incapable, they are made incapable by exclusion (in the case of persons with disability).

To align oneself with the wholesale environmental change that inclusion brings, is to align yourself with the persistent discomfort which is the process of change. In the 1960's (and today for that matter), men may fear the notion of seeing women as their equals. Similarly, people who are "typical" may fear the notion of seeing people who are atypical (due to impairments, social skill deficits, etc.) as their equals because of the demands equality might place upon them. If you are not my equal, I may feel that I needn't change. However, if you are my equal, and you experience devaluation from me, that implies that I am very wrong in my interactions with you. Disability ministry, like loving my neighbor, will cost me something. "Becoming a friend to a marginalized, excluded person is an act of self-imposed exile from most of the world. It is liberating, an act of freedom. It is a path to personal growth where one proclaims a new set of values" (Vanier 1998, p. 96). It is exile, because you move away from the excluders who are most of us. Similarly, Goffman (1963) spoke of "courtesy stigma" (p. 42), which he described as,

...the individual who is related through the social structure to a stigmatized individual—a relationship that leads the wider society to treat both individuals in some respects as one... all obliged to share some of the discredit of the stigmatized person to whom they are related (p. 42).

Friendship with the excluded and the changes that relationship brings in you may cause you to be excluded as well. In describing advocacy, Wolfensberger (2003) cautions about the cost to the advocate.

This distinct cost may involve any number of things: time that one would much rather have spent on something else, wear and tear on one's emotions, such as one would ordinarily avoid; investment of one's material substance and possessions; sacrifice of rest, sleep and/or recreation; etc. Indeed, the cost may involve one of the highest prices of advocacy, and that is being at risk, such as the risk of incurring resentment and hostility from others, of being taunted, or becoming an object of ridicule, of being considered foolish or crazy, of being rejected by one's peers and colleagues, of being in danger of loss of job; the risk may involve that of being hurt in violence, loss of health—perhaps even loss of life. Indeed, without significant cost, an action should not be viewed as advocacy...even if it is otherwise valuable action (p. 123).

The demands of advocacy parallel those of loving your neighbor. Perhaps I may not have the knowledge to be an advocate, however, truly loving my neighbor will cost me in a very similar way. Later in the passage above, Wolfensberger wonders about whether there could even be such a thing as cost-free advocacy. In our context, we might ask if I can love my neighbor if there is no cost to me. What would one call “love for your neighbor” that involves no cost to you?

Power Evidenced when People with Disabilities are Indispensable

Paul says that in reality, people who seem weaker are indispensable. They must not be labeled and dismissed. The cost alluded to above must be paid. So the second aspect of power here is that the seemingly weaker ones are indispensable. They are powerful in that they are needed by all for something critical to the whole body. Both the seemingly weaker and the seemingly stronger need the one thought to be weaker because he is indispensable. Thus, in some manner, those thought to be weaker ones have power over those thought to be stronger ones because the seemingly stronger ones cannot do without them. I may not know or understand why I cannot do without someone, but that does not diminish the truth of the statement and it may be the impetus to cause me to find out. Vanier (1998) chides,

The excluded, I believe, live certain values that we all need to discover and to live ourselves before we can become truly human. It is not just a question of performing good deeds for those who are excluded but of being open and vulnerable to them in order to receive the life they can offer; it is to become their friends. If we start to include the disadvantaged in our lives and enter into heartfelt relationships with them, they will change things in us. They will call us to be people of mutual trust, to take time to listen and be with each other. They will call us out from our individualism and need for power into belonging to each other and being open to others. They will break down the prejudices and protective walls that gave rise to exclusion in the first place. They will then start to affect our human organizations, revealing new ways of being and walking together... (p 84-85).

The author has often related that, “If I don’t know your purpose, that does not mean you don’t have a purpose. That means that I don’t know your purpose.” Impairment or disability does not exclusively put one in the weaker or stronger category. We are all on a continuum in comparison to

others. There are people with one form of impairment that disdain those with another form of impairment, and disability is only one criterion for placement on a human strength continuum. It is but one reason why someone might be devalued as weaker.

As stated, the end result of someone being perceived as weaker is that they may be dismissed or excluded. Those who have determined that someone is weaker, have gotten it wrong, but they nonetheless have the power to enforce their determination and thereby, another's "strength" goes unnoticed or unrecognized. This is a significant aspect of maturity in ministry within the Christian church. The power of those who seem stronger may be evidenced in a person being observed and then relegated to the class of being weaker. However, "As soon as we start choosing and judging people instead of welcoming them as they are – with their sometimes hidden beauty, as well as their more frequently visible weaknesses – we are reducing life, not fostering it." (Vanier, 1998, p. 23). One might look at a church or the Church and ask whether people are making the sacrifices described above. Once again, as congregations move toward valuing and advocating for devalued persons they are moving toward maturity in ministry. This is disability ministry, however, it is not understood as such.

"God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" is what 1 Corinthians 1:27 says. This and other passages (also 1 Corinthians 1:28, James 2) shed light on why the seemingly stronger might not want to facilitate the presence of the seemingly weaker. If they do, among other reasons they may be shamed by their unloving behavior. In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), a man is beaten and left half dead. The author, having known someone who was beaten and left for dead, reminds the reader that the man was a person with disabilities at that point, and may have lived the rest of his life as a person with disabilities. We should also not overlook the fact that when Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" he describes a person with impairments. As the beaten man lays there (there is no mention of him calling out or doing anything at all), his mere presence reveals the character of two seemingly stronger passers-by: he shames them. It is a parable, yet such a thing could have happened. But if Jesus (or someone who had been observing) had not told this story, we would have no idea that it had happened. Perhaps it was in a remote location or a time of day such that the actions of the priest and Levite would likely not be seen. Jesus points out that they were not being a neighbor. But in a similar manner, if a devalued, seemingly weaker man, perhaps a man with autism, attempted to participate in a local church

congregation, his presence would also display the neighborliness or lack thereof of that congregation.

The Body Connected

Like the Body of Christ, when I consider my real body, I notice that the parts are connected (1 Corinthians 12:12). But imagine I could in some way take my nose, cut it off and put it in a jar in a manner that I have devised to keep it alive. It would technically be a part of my body, but in reality it is not connected. Some disability ministries are like that. I have a nose, it is in a jar over there. It is alive, but it is separated from me. Now because I have separated it from myself, I no longer have the benefit of being a body with a connected nose. If I have separated it a long time ago, I may not even remember what my body was like when it was still attached so that I do not even notice its absence. At the same time, my nose doesn't know what it is missing by not being a part of me. It is sitting in its jar, alive, living its life as a separated nose. Because I know that a body should have its nose connected, I understand how ridiculous this proposition is. My nose, however, comes to view its separation as just the way life is.

The end result of this arrangement is that my nose has no idea what it is like to be a part of the body and the body forgets or never knew what it is like to have a nose. The nose brings something to the body that no other part brings. How would I ever know that there are aromas floating around in the air, if I didn't have a nose? So my nose never finds out what its purpose is because it is separated from me and I never learn about the sense of smell because I have cut off my nose and removed it from me. To push this analogy a bit further, the reconnection of my nose allows me to appreciate beauty that I would never know if it were not connected: it has power. I would never know the fragrance of a rose, or fresh bread baking or orange blossoms in a Southern California spring. Living in SoCal, I would also not be able to detect danger like the smell of a brush fire. I would also not know that I need a shower because I have body odor, or smell of urine. I need my nose attached to myself to be a whole body. My nose will reveal things about me, to me: about the body to the body. This is in part what the presence of those who seem weaker will do to those who seem stronger. Weakness reveals beauty when the grace of God is revealed directly or through His body, the church. We see this in mutual love and support, overlooking weakness (for example limited social skills) and taking time to know people who are not easily known (e.g. persons with mental illness or severe intellectual disabilities). The presence of those who seem weaker will also reveal my ugliness

when I refuse to love or serve, when I reject people seeing them as “other,” something different from myself.

Even if I did not want to be loving towards my neighbor, his presence might cause me to do so. Psychologists call this the “Hawthorne effect” in that people will often display behavior they perceive is desired by those who are observing (maybe no one was observing the priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan parable). If I think those in the environment want me to act in a particular way (whether they do or not) I will change my behavior to reflect that. For good or ill, the presence of people with disabilities in congregations might trigger this effect, hopefully for the good. However, once again, some may not want to be put in the position of having their character revealed by someone whose presence makes them feel uncomfortable, or they may not want to feel the pressure to love and serve their neighbor. The easiest thing for them to do then, would be to either go to a different church where there are not such demands being placed upon members (perceived or real), to even segregate those individuals with disabilities within the larger group or to reject those whose presence might place demands for service on them.

The Indispensable Nature

There is a scene in the 2003 western, *Open Range*, where Denton Baxter (the evil land owner) gets shot up in a gun fight. He drags himself to Doc Barlow’s office and finds him working on Button, one of the good guys. Baxter pulls out his gun to shoot Button lying on the doctor’s table. But Doc Barlow tells him, “You pull that trigger, Baxter, you can forget about me patching you up!” Baxter is now faced with a dilemma. In order for Doc Barlow’s indispensable nature, to be evidenced, Baxter must relinquish his power over the doctor. When he does so, he himself benefits from the doctor’s “gifting.” However, if he as the seemingly powerful person in the room (he has a gun, etc.) does not set aside his power, neither he nor the other wounded man will benefit from the doctor’s indispensable nature. The implication from the 1 Corinthians 12:22 passage is not that those in the Body of Christ who seem stronger are violent or evil as in the movie. However, there is a wrong being perpetuated. The wrong is seen in people with power prohibiting others who are gifted such that they are Biblically described as indispensable, from expressing that gifting by refusing to change. The Body of Christ as a whole, truly does suffer in this way, when one part suffers (1 Corinthians 12:26). The strong are haughty and the seemingly weak are excluded.

Interestingly, Paul’s correction once again implies that those who have made the determination of another’s weakness are actually wrong. Although

some are thought weak, their strength, their power will not be demonstrated unless those who wrongly determined they were weak, repent of their error, humble themselves, and provide the opportunity for them to evidence their power (one aspect being how they are a conduit of God's power). The seemingly stronger must relent from their haughty exercise of power in both relegating others to weakness and on some level enforcing that perception (through exclusion, segregation, paternalistic behaviors, etc.), ultimately preventing the perceived weak from displaying the strength that causes them to be labeled indispensable. "Power is something that is granted not something taken" (Vanier, 1998, p. 75). This power of the seemingly weaker when permitted over those who are seemingly stronger, will demonstrate why they are indispensable. Perhaps at this point, the "stronger" will repent of the label they projected on another of being weaker ¹ (2 Corinthians 7:8-11). But for the stronger to benefit from that realization, they must first relinquish their power over the situation, no longer relegating others to weakness and the exclusive social consequences that accompany that designation. Power in weakness has the potential to be present, but it is not displayed, not expressed. It is unused, frustrated from being employed because those having the power to open the door for the expression of another's contribution, refuse to do so by refusing to relinquish their own power such that it might be seen.

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 4:7, Paul addressed the haughtiness of his readers asking, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" They should not see themselves in a manner as "different from anyone else." Paul himself was someone who experienced a difference that would have caused him to be relegated to the seemingly weaker class (2 Corinthians 12:10). The end result is the production of entirely wrong, entirely negative perceptions of what is indispensable for body life. At the most basic level, this is seen in a lack of love for others. It is also evidence of pride in that I am unwilling to become a servant and in this case, allow others to express their gifting. This unwillingness to serve, to facilitate expression of the gifting of others because of what might be demanded of me (power over my time, my activities, my traditions and the necessity for change in each of these areas) will prohibit the indispensable nature of those seemingly weaker from ever being expressed.

Power is Made Perfect in Weakness

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul describes his experience with a "thorn in the flesh," how he prayed to have it removed, and God's response, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." The implication

is not that God's power is imperfect, but that weakness allows God's power to be evidenced the most perfectly. Perhaps this perfect expression of the power of God contributes to why the parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable. Paul says, "for when I am weak, then I am strong." If for no other reason, weakness may drive us to dependence on God. Strength may cause me to see myself as sufficient within myself. Weakness disarms me. For example, in my own suffering or if I wade into the suffering of others, I find myself at a total loss. My cry becomes like that of Jehosophat in 2 Chronicles 20:12. When he is surrounded by the armies of "the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites" (verse 1), he goes before his people and prays, "For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. *We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you*" (emphasis added). Desperate situations reinforce in us our need to depend upon God. However, if I am seemingly stronger and I am disconnected from seemingly weaker parts of the body, I will perhaps not suffer with the parts that suffer (as described in 1 Corinthians 12:26) and be lead to dependence upon God. I will not allow another part of the body to have power over me in making any sort of demands for humility on me, on them, on the entire body. But through my entrance into their weakness, I allow others to make demands on me; sometimes through unsolvable situations of life. These demands cause me to depend upon God. Vanier (1998) counsils us, "We learn love from our belonging. I also learned how weakness is a form of strength. We find love through our weakness" (p. 40). God's power can be perfected in my participation in another's weakness, if I allow their weakness to become my weakness. But I don't want to participate in their experience or at times the difficulties others face, so my response is that I will exclude them. There might be a degree of unconsciousness about these issues, however, one might ask "Why is there a collective unconsciousness within the church?" This unconsciousness could be squarely placed at the feet of church leadership at a variety of levels. As a result, the statement "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it" ends up becoming an aspiration, or a statement of how the body might be. But one only has to know the experience of someone with leprosy to understand the impact on a physical body, on hands and feet, when the body does not experience the pain of all of its parts.

Consider the things that Paul delights in, in verse 10 of that same 2 Corinthians 12 passage. Paul is not healed of the "thorn" and in response to all his weaknesses (not only the thorn) he states, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in *weaknesses*, in *insults*, in

hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (emphasis added). This litany in part, arguably reflects what have been referred to as the social consequences of disability (Wolfensberger, 2001), that people experience.³ In praying for healing, Paul may have been revealing his own belief that he needed to be healed, because he saw himself as weak. But after praying three times, with God responding on the third request, “My grace is sufficient for you” we see a change in Paul. He still has the thorn, but it appears that he didn’t pray for healing anymore. Perhaps he now prays that God will help him to receive His sufficient grace. One has to believe that if God tells you that His grace is sufficient, He is not only telling you the truth but that He is making a commitment to you that His grace will be sufficient. Could it be that Paul at this point came to understand power in his own life and the indispensable nature of those thought weak? Now when he relies on God’s grace, he understands that when he is weak he is strong. Only people who lack power in a situation or are weak have the opportunity to delight in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties. The strong and powerful do not have this experience.

Other aspects of this power are the changes brought simply through the presence of persons with disabilities expressing their perspectives or simply living their lives. Because persons with disabilities have not been present in the past, the church has been incomplete. If something is lacking indispensable parts and then gains them, one must wonder what it will become. It is exciting to recognize the work of God in bringing persons with disabilities to the church through the growing awareness of leadership and congregational members. God continues to complete the Body of Christ through the addition of people heretofore overlooked or ignored. It is also exciting to think that God’s perfect power in the church is being “perfected” through the addition of people with disabilities within the church.

The presence of devalued people in regular community life has at least one other effect. “When we ally ourselves with the excluded in society, not only are we enabled to see people as people and to join them in their struggle for justice, to work for community and places of belonging, but we also develop the critical tool for seeing what is wrong in our society” (Vanier, 1998, p. 96). Coming alongside of devalued people, our eyes are opened...

...to having been sheltered from devalued people and the bad things that get done to them...many people start out assuming that the human service system is benign, facilitative and helpful. What they experience is so often just the opposite (Wolfensberger, 2003, p. 139-140).

The Christian church needs to change and the presence of societally devalued people is arguably the most critical variable, the tipping point in facilitating that change.

Change to Acceptance

Change is hard and people will resist change to the point that they may actually want the church to be a place that doesn't love rather than something radically different than it has been in the past. Why would even those in leadership resist the presence of indispensable parts? Would they prefer to remain an exclusionary congregation that resists the presence of people who would make demands upon them? Foucault (1978) stated,

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power...Their [power relationships] existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary (p. 95-96).

Resistance, even resistance to a good thing, may not be based upon some form of universal principle but rather may be the result of cultural upbringing or the reflection of a social construction or, to quote the Right Reverend Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of the Church of England, being "fed in a particular way" (McNair, 2013). "Thus for many people to all work toward a bad thing requires no deliberate or conscious conspiracy"² (Wolfensberger, 2007).

Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations... They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite" (Foucault, 1978, p. 96).

Could the resistance of people toward allowing parts of the body that seem weaker to be present, to be indispensable, be reflected in the resistances that Foucault spoke about? The Church has evidenced a "plurality of resistances."

The author would argue that if persons who seem weaker were permitted to be indispensable, the church would experience wholesale change. The potential change would be hardly imaginable to most in leadership or in the pew (although to a small degree perhaps it is, hence the resistance). This is, because with limited experience with those who seem weaker, in particular, persons with disabilities, one could have little notion of how their presence would be a corrective for the church (remember my nose), potentially causing it to become a place where people are truly loved and accepted independent of personal characteristics. If congregational members were aware of the impending change they might also resist it. However, Jesus would perhaps say to all of us, “you have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions... Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. *And you do many things like that*” (Mark 7:8 & 13, emphasis added). God’s word tells us that seemingly weaker people are indispensable and His power is perfected in weakness.

Closing Reflection

The author has been personally working in ministry to and with persons with intellectual disabilities since 1974. Being engaged in this type of ministry, he recognizes that not everyone feels the call for evangelism and discipleship to persons who experience impairment. he has not been called to youth ministry or international missions. However, he would never say that youth ministry or international missions are not a priority or should not be a focus for EVERY church.

It is one thing to recognize that one is not gifted in a particular area of ministry. It is quite another to feel comfortable in communicating in disobedience, particularly to people whom society has devalued, “I don’t need you!” (1 Corinthians 12:21). With the simple yet profound statement from local pastors, from university and seminary professors, “We want people with disabilities in the church!” our traditions cannot remain the same and programs would have to change. But it is a corrective towards obedience.

Notes

1. The process that the church needs to follow as it repents of its exclusion of persons with impairments parallels Paul’s comments in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 related to Godly sorrow. ¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. ¹¹ See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.” As I reflect on this need, which must begin with repentance, it is observed that Godly sorrow brings about, 1) earnestness—honesty

with myself and others, 2) eagerness to examine myself—What can I do? How can I help? How do I contribute to the bad? 3) indignation—what I see should not be, 4) alarm—something must be done immediately, 5) longing—for a different reality for people, that God’s kingdom would come, 6) concern—for societally devalued people who have been excluded from the church, 7) a desire to see justice done—in the lives of the people.

2. The complete statement made by Dr. Wolfensberger in the 2007 Social Role Valorization training is as follows. “Collective unconsciousness can be so vast that even the most global societal policies may be undeclared, unexplicated, unacknowledged, and even denied. Thus for many people to all work toward a bad thing requires no deliberate or conscious conspiracy. While this is well-known by social scientists, most citizens are not aware of how they themselves can be totally unconsciously acting out undeclared, large-scale, societal policies in their own daily lives.” (from “A leadership-oriented introductory social role valorization (SRV) workshop, February 27, 2007).
3. Wolfensberger (1998, p. 12-21) as a part of his Social Role Valorization theory, describes 18 wounds faced by devalued people. These might also be referred to as the “social consequences of disability.” They include: **Wound 1:** Bodily impairment; **Wound 2:** Functional impairment; **Wound 3:** Relegation to low social status/deviancy; **Wound 4:** Attitude of rejection-disproportionately/relentlessly; **Wound 5:** Cast into one or more historic deviancy roles; **Wound 6:** Symbolic stigmatizing, “marking,” “deviancy imaging,” “branding;” **Wound 7:** Being multiply jeopardized/scapegoated; **Wound 8:** Distanciation: usually via segregation and also congregation; **Wound 9:** Absence or loss of natural, freely given relationships & substitution with artificial/boughten ones; **Wound 10:** Loss of control, perhaps even autonomy & freedom; **Wound 11:** Discontinuity with the physical environment and objects “physical discontinuation;” **Wound 12:** Social and relationship discontinuity & even abandonment; **Wound 13:** Deindividualization, “mortification” reducing humanness; **Wound 14:** Involuntary material poverty, material/financial exploitation; **Wound 15:** Impoverishment of experience especially that of the typical valued world; **Wound 16:** Exclusion from knowledge and participation in higher-order value systems (e.g. religion) that give meaning and direction to life and provide community; **Wound 17:** Having one’s life “wasted.”...mindsets contributing to life wasting; **Wound 18:** Being the object of brutalization, killing thoughts & deathmaking.

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