

Typical Sibling Support Group



Supporting typical siblings can be fun and easy. A support group can allow siblings who feel they are barely surviving to begin feeling a sense of peace and belonging. The following six-lesson curriculum is designed to give young siblings an opportunity to discuss the unique aspects of their family, to learn more about their brother or sister's disability, to get to know other siblings, to build relationships with adults in the church who might become trusted advocates, and to discover God's hand in their lives. Sibling activities can be structured many ways, we encourage you to use this as a springboard in your own sibling ministry.

Weekly Activities

Doing some sort of activity together as a group each week before launching into your discussion time can help build relationships allowing those attending to feel more comfortable sharing.

Group activities might include:

- Miniature golf
- Bowling
- Playing sardines or hide-and-seek in the church
- Photo scavenger hunt
- Water games (water balloon toss, slip-n-slide, etc.)

Having snacks available can also help to foster a welcoming environment. You may even consider preparing some snacks together as a group activity. Snacks that are fun to prepare together might include rice crispy treats, popcorn balls, trail mix, or marshmallow snow men.

Weekly Discussion Groups

Week 1:

- *Preparation:* Cover the walls with paper and have markers available; purchase inexpensive journals for each student and a variety of stickers (journals will stay in class until the last meeting).
- *Ice Breaker:* Draw your family on the paper covering the wall. Once everyone is done, we will take turns introducing our family members to the group
- *Group Discussion:* God created you and He created your siblings. Each of you have great value in His eyes, and He has plans for you. *"For you created my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."* (Psalm 139:13-14a). Good verses to compliment the discussion: Psalm 56:3-4.
 - Sometimes when things are rough, it's easy to worry and be afraid. God promises to protect you, right where you are.

- *Journal Time:* Each student should choose a journal to personalize (*Please Note: It is important to assure the kids that their journals will be kept private*). Take time as a group to decorate the journals with verses, stickers, and markers. Ask the siblings to respond to the following prompts in their journals:
 1. What I wish people understood about me and/or my family.
 2. The best things about living with my sibling with disabilities.
- *Closing:* Ask if anyone wants to share anything that they wrote in their journal. Ask everyone to each bring with them next time 2-3 sentences that describes their brother or sister's disability to share with the group. Pray for the group before they head out.

Week 2:

- *Preparation:* Call or email the kids to remind them to bring a description of their sibling's disability. Bring a copy of the book *Living with A Brother or Sister with Special Needs* by Donald Meyer and Patricia Vadasy.
- *Ice breaker:* Find someone who has the same favorite food as you do.
- *Group Discussion:* Understanding our siblings' disabilities. As adults, many typical siblings have shared that growing up no one really explained their brother or sister's disability to them, so they didn't really understand it. Some even expressed misunderstandings they had like wondering if they could end up with the same disability or fearing they had somehow caused it. Good verses to complement the discussion are Isaiah 42:5 and Isaiah 43:7.
 - Why do you think this might happen? (busy parents, parents not knowing you didn't understand, typical sibling not wanting to let the parent know they're worried)
 - Ask everyone to briefly share the description of their sibling's disability.
 - For each disability present in their families, go through the correlating section in *Living with a Brother or Sister with Special Needs*. Discuss what the everyone learned or what they already knew.
- *Journal Time:* Please consider the following prompts as you write in your journals.
 1. 1 or 2 things I learned about my brother or sister's disability.
 2. Is there anything you wish you could explain to your parents?
 3. 1 or 2 things I learned about God from these verses.
- *Closing:* Ask if anyone wants to share anything that they wrote in their journal. Spend time praying for each of the typical sibling's families; ask the Lord to begin showing each member of the family His plans for them.

Week 3:

- *Ice breaker:* Have kids use their name to write an acrostic that describes them. For example, Sally might write:
Sweet
Athletic
Long-legged
Lonely (sometimes)
Younger than anyone else in my family
- *Group Discussion:* The church is a safe place to be honest and find support. Good verses to compliment the discussion: 1 Peter 3:8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12.
 - Do you ever feel like you need to be the “good one”? Or like you shouldn’t bother your parents with your problems? If so, is there anyone you feel safe sharing this with?
 - How can God use the church to comfort people, helping them feel loved and understood?
 - Is there anything you could do to build friendships that allow you to be honest and encourage you follow Jesus?
- *Journal Time:* Please consider the following prompts as you write in your journals.
 1. What my church can do to help me feel loved and understood?
 2. Who I’d like to get to know better in the church
- *Closing:* Ask if anyone wants to share anything that they wrote in their journal. Pray for each child; ask the Lord to help them build safe relationships in the church and for the church to know how to support them.

Week 4:

- *Ice breaker:* Read 1-2 children’s books about some of the disabilities found in the kids’ families.
- *Discussion Time:* Read Psalm 127:3-5 and Exodus 4:9-11.
 - How did God uniquely make you?
 - How did God uniquely make your sibling(s)?
- *Journal Time:* Please consider the following prompts as you write in your journals.
 1. Special qualities God has given me.
 2. If I was going to write a book about my family experience, what would it be about?
 3. Draw a cover for your picture book.
- *Closing:* Ask if anyone wants to share anything that they wrote in their journal. Pray that each child will see the incredible way God has designed them and will begin to see God’s direction for his/her life.

Week 5:

- *Preparation:* Tape a large piece of paper on the wall and have markers available.
- *Ice breaker:* On the paper on the wall, have kids write one sentence that tells about a time when someone was particularly kind to them. Read another children's book from the list.
- *Group Discussion:* God is preparing you for wonderful things. He brings others into your life, including your sibling, to shape you into someone He can use. Good verses to compliment the discussion: II Corinthians 1:3-4.
 - How has your family helped you become a better person?
 - How has God used other people to help you become more like Jesus?
- *Journal Time:* Please consider the following prompts as you write in your journals.
 1. Name 3 positive things you've learned from your family that you may not have learned if you didn't have a brother or sister with disabilities.
 2. If you were going to write a book about your family, what would you say? Outline your book here.
- *Closing:* Ask if anyone wants to share anything that they wrote in their journal. Pray that each child will begin to see their talents and the ways God has gifted them for specific things.

Week 6:

- *Ice breaker:* Take some time to tell each person in the room one thing you really like about them.
- *Group Time:* God doesn't make mistakes. Read Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:38-39.
 - What kind of future might God be creating for you?
 - How is He preparing that future by putting you in your unique situation right now?
 - What does He promise in Romans?
 - How does that give you confidence going forward?
- *Journal Time:* Please consider the following prompts as you write in your journals.
 1. Write about the promises you learned in Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:38-39.
 2. Continue outlining or sketching the book about your family that you began last week.
- *Closing:* Ask if anyone wants to share anything that they wrote in their journal. Pray that God blesses each child as they go out equipped with new knowledge—that each child will understand they are wonderfully made by a God who does not make mistakes.