

# LESSON 14: PROVIDENCE

## Memory work

**28. Q. What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?**

*A. We can be patient in adversity,  
thankful in prosperity,  
and with a view to the future  
we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father  
that no creature shall separate us from His love;  
for all creatures are so completely in His hand  
that without His will they cannot so much as move.*

## Homework

Read the attached article from *Clarion*.

(You can also find it on the church website under catechism materials – the homework document for next class).

1. (3) What is one office to which all who are developmentally or otherwise significantly challenged are called? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

2. (2) What has parent after parent testified to? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. (2) Special children often put others to shame. In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. (2) What can special children also teach us? \_\_\_\_\_

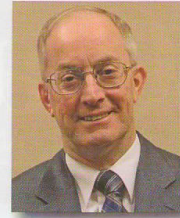
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5. (1) Which organisation in BC is frequently used by our churches to assist people with special needs?

\_\_\_\_\_

*Editorial*

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## What's the Sense of Living with Severe Disabilities?

*We may never get the answers we would like to have during this earthly life*

*Author's note: Some thoughts triggered by having the privilege of conducting a funeral for a member of the congregation to which I belong who had developmental disabilities.*

What's the sense of living with severe disabilities? An answer our secular society gives is that there is no point in raising a disabled child. It's best to have an abortion as soon as you know the child to be born is not normal. Get it over with.

As Christians we can be very thankful that the Lord our God enables us to give another answer. Parents of such special children will testify that it is far from easy to raise a child with significant disabilities. There are all kinds of frustrations, challenges, and questions. However, in faith these same parents will also testify that there is much reason for gratitude and joy in the Lord in receiving and raising children with special needs. Such children are a precious gift from God's fatherly hand.

### **Uncertainty and certainty**

Receiving a special child raises all kinds of questions, especially "why?" Does the Lord not love us? Have we done something to deserve this? Is God punishing us? The good thing of such questions is that they are directed to God. He after all is the Giver of life. In his hands is all our existence. He is sovereign and therefore he indeed is the one who gives such children to whomever he pleases. God is the Creator and Giver of life and he is not accountable to us.

We may never get the answers we would like to have during this earthly life. But, with all the questions and doubts that come up, believing parents may know for a certainty that such a child comes from the hand of God and is a member of the covenant community. That reality is signified and sealed at baptism when the triune God himself claims that child as his own precious possession. The One who embraces that child as his very own will also provide in every way. He will use the parents to that end and parents can be sure that God will give what is necessary (2 Cor 12:9). God will also provide by means of the church community, as well as by society's support services. But he will provide. And all things will work out for good for all the promises of the covenant are also for those with disabilities. His Word is true and his promises are sure. All this is a source of great encouragement to the parents.

### *The Lord of the covenant calls all those in covenant with him to his service*

There is another aspect to be noted. The Lord of the covenant calls all those in covenant with him to his service. Also those with disabilities therefore have an office, a task to perform. They have a divine and holy calling!

### **An office to perform**

The office of those with disabilities varies depending on how the Lord has endowed them. But some elements are common to all who are developmentally or otherwise significantly challenged. For one thing, their very presence testifies to the brokenness of this creation. The results of original sin are very much with us in this present life and this reality is underlined by the special children God gives. Their presence reminds us that we can never underestimate the devastation sin has caused and it keeps us mindful of the need for redemption and renewal through the work of the Saviour. Having a child with disabilities can help in keeping our focus on what's truly important in life. Ultimately this world is a passing stage (1 John 2:15-17) and we need to live close to the Lord in expectation of the full deliverance from all the misery that sin has brought into the world. And the Lord will grant that deliverance! We can now already see how he is restoring life in a fallen world. This is often especially visible in the special needs children he gives.

God makes no mistakes when he entrusts parents with a child with significant disabilities. He himself has designed that child in the womb of its mother (Ps 139:13) and he has designed it in such a way that it could fulfill its office and calling (cf. Eph 4:7). Such special children are often endowed with limitations that enable them to be untouched and unencumbered by many of the concerns that can burden people today. Most of us go through life with many responsibilities and cares. Worries can gnaw away at the joy of life and even rob people of happiness. But this is not the case with special needs people. Because of the way God has made them, these special members of the church have few responsibilities that can weigh others down. As a result they can reflect something of the joy that should be part of everyone's life before God. Those with disabilities may not even be able to speak, but they can communicate a tremendous joy that shines from their

life. Parent after parent has testified to the fact that they have been so enriched by the joy that their special child or children have given them. In giving and showing this joy, the special child does his or her office according to God's design for their life. In showing this joy, they give hope for the full joy and redemption that is coming. After all, if such joy is possible in a broken world, how wonderful it must be on the new earth that is coming! Such a joy exuding from a special needs person's life can even affect an entire congregation in which such a child of God is a member.

### *We bear each other's burdens and share each other's joys*

Another aspect of the office of the special children is that they often put others to shame by exhibiting a firm and unwavering child-like faith. There is no doubt in their minds that God loves them and will provide for them. With no hesitation whatsoever they will entrust themselves completely to the Lord knowing that he cares for them. Many a parent has said that they were put to shame by the simple and complete confidence in the Lord and his promises that their child with disabilities demonstrated. Also in this respect, God shows his work of the renewal of life through the

*One way to give needed and concrete support to parents of special children (cf. Gal 6:2) is to become a member of organizations like*

#### **Anchor**

(<http://www.anchor-association.com>)

in southern Ontario,

#### **Rehoboth**

(<http://www.rehoboth.ab.ca/>)

in Alberta,

#### **Bethesda**

(<http://www.bethesdabc.com>)

in the Fraser Valley, and

#### **Cornerstone**

(Email: [cornerstoneccs@hotmail.com](mailto:cornerstoneccs@hotmail.com))

in Manitoba.

testimony of those with developmental or other issues. In this way he also encourages us to emulate their faith (cf. Matt 18:3).

And finally, although more could be said, special children can also teach us gratitude. It is so easy to become dissatisfied with life and the lot that God has given, until one stands before a developmentally challenged person who is happy and firmly believes in God's good provision for his life. Such people can put those endowed with so many of God's gifts to shame for their ungratefulness. If a person with severe developmental restrictions can be happy with the Lord's provision, should others not be even more grateful and joyous?

### **Moving forward**

It is a great privilege for those who are able to assist the parents of special children in all sorts of ways. It is also a holy duty. After all, we are a covenant community of believers and we bear each other's burdens and share each other's joys. Those special children are precious to all of us for they are children with whom God has his covenant. And he designed each one of them for his or her specific calling and office. It is a privilege to help them fulfill that office!

And when, in God's sovereign disposition, such a developmentally challenged person has completed his or her task, then the Lord calls him or her home to himself. The vacuum that is often left by such a death underlines the vital role that such a person played in the family and often even within the congregation. These special members of the church leave a real legacy, a legacy of reminding God's people of what is truly important in life and of what unencumbered joy can be like, regardless of the outward circumstances of life. Those challenged in all sorts of ways, physically and mentally, are therefore at the end of the day a great blessing for others. They can stimulate us to be of good courage as we all move along life's path towards the perfection that will one day characterize the new world. C