



Special Kids...Special Families Newsletter

The Latest from Texas' Special Kids...

September greetings from Texas' Special Kids! Since we last wrote, we had a great trip to the THSC conference in The Woodlands. We all had a good time, the younger children enjoyed their time with the sitter at the hotel, and we had a special visit with friends who used to go to our church and now live in The Woodlands. All that was good measure, pressed down and running over, added to how blessed our time at the conference was. We especially enjoyed presenting our newest workshop for the first time. This one includes our oldest son, and we were glad to have him participate as our "props guy."

We are finally slowing down after being on the road quite often in a five-month period of time. This month, we are speaking for a local support group in the Denton area, but the rest of our time is focused on family, work, and the other, local ministries we do when we are not on the road.

Our email traffic has been busy for weeks, as we are hearing from many families who are making the decision for the first time to homeschool their special needs kids. We are also conversing via email with a few churches that are thinking about starting special needs ministries. That excites us! We believe that support from churches is vital to families facing challenges with their children.

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Upcoming Events

**September 23, 2006 Denton County Home School Association
 Denton, Texas
 TSK will be speaking at a special meeting of this north Texas support group.**

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Visit our Website at:
www.TxSpecialKids.org
 Or Write us at:
**P.O. Box 151335
 Arlington, Texas 76015**



How We Can Help You

Write Texas' Special Kids from our website anytime you have a question. We will write a specialized response, tailored to your family's needs. TSK is also available to speak for your homeschool support group or church on a variety of topics. Email or write us at the website.

The Heart of the Matter Unreached People Group *by Doug Arnold*
*"Blessed Assurance," ...504..."Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste" ...504..."Of glory divine!" ...504...504?
 OH! That's **our** number!*

For many families with special needs children, getting called out of a worship service is not a matter of *if*, but *when*. Every week your attention is diverted to the glowing red numbers at the front of the church, watching, waiting. The numbers that remind you, "My child is different." On your way to answer the call, you mutter to yourself, "I don't know why we even bother! This is just too difficult!"

This scene is played out all too often. Or rather, it is not played out, as the family with a special needs child gives up on the church experience because it is just too hard to make it an enjoyable, enriching experience for parents or child. Because of this, it is our assertion that many families with special needs children are an **unreached people group**.

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How You Can Help Us... We covet your prayers for the following things...

Wisdom and Energy for Patsy and Doug as they strive to meet the needs of the families who contact them either by email or in the planning for next year's convention season.

Finances for the Ministry of Texas' Special Kids—The Arnolds see such a great need in the home school special needs community that the desire of their hearts is to have the funds sufficient to meet their family's needs and allow them to work the ministry of TSK on a full-time basis. Right now, Doug works full-time as a special education teacher and Patsy home schools and teaches part-time at a local university in the evenings. *Please lift up these needs for TSK.*

To remove your name from our mailing list, please email: doug@txspecialkids.org

The Latest from Texas' Special Kids... (Cont. from page 1)

Our feature article this month focuses on that very topic. You may want to make copies and distribute them as appropriate in

your community of faith.

This is the time of year when we plan for the coming conference season. Planning now is essential for the work to come. Please pray for us as we seek the Lord regarding how we can serve you best. We eagerly desire your feedback on a couple of ideas that have surfaced:

1) We are working on a plan to do a *Homeschooling the Special Needs Child* conference in our own back yard, so to speak, in March. We have a tentative date but are working on a place before we make that information known. We live in Arlington, by the way, so we are talking about a location in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. Please don't think, "Oh, they hear from other people. I don't need to tell them what I think." We truly want to know if there is an interest in this.

2) The email traffic has increased over the years, and we see that it is not slowing down. Of course, we want to give everyone attention, because each situation is unique. However, since we do this ministry part-time, working around our other obligations (including homeschooling our own kids!), we are trying to find ways to make our time online more efficient. One proposal would be to create a Members Only area on our web site, where families could join for a minimal annual amount, then access all of our printed material and sample scenarios of situations that might arise. This would be a means of putting in accessible print everything we can think of that families might need. Of course, we would add to it over time, as we hear new circumstances that we have not addressed. Is this something that would interest you? Would it make it easier for you to get the information you are looking for, without having to wait for us to get back to you?

We are doing what we can to streamline our work, but we are finding that we still cannot answer messages

as soon as we wish we could.

Please also pray for us, that the Lord would make a way for us to be able to spend more time on the ministry. The ideal would be for both of us to be able to resign from our jobs and work TSK full-time, except, of course, for the time required to teach our kids! We would essentially become one full-time and one part-time employee of TSK. However, as Doug is fond of saying, "All it takes is money!" There are certain parameters, guidelines we have established for our ministry, that govern what that would look like. We are not going to sell anything, beyond the memberships mentioned previously, and we are not going to name dollar amounts to donors and ask them to give a specific contribution. We will, however, make the need known and trust the Lord to work in hearts. We will not sell because we do not want to feel any obligations to someone else or their product. We are also not interested in starting a home business. If we are going to do this, TSK needs to be our business. We are not going to divide our loyalties between another "job" and TSK. That is not what we are about. Our heart is to work TSK, because we believe that is where the need is. So, please pray for abundant wisdom for us as we seek God's will for our ministry and His way of financing the work.

Continue to look for a newsletter once a month. We are enjoying this communication with you. We especially appreciate the messages that come from you, telling us how your special kids are doing. That is encouragement to us and helps us know that we are still walking in the Lord's path for us. Please don't stop writing!

Blessings to you all! Patsy and Doug

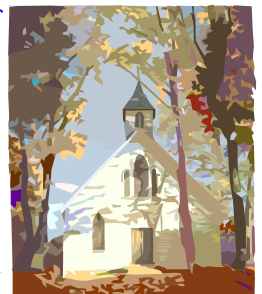
The Heart of the Matter...**Unreached People Group****(cont.)**

We recently heard an *unreached people group* defined as "anyone who has a greater than 50% chance of never hearing the gospel or never being able to be part of a Christian fellowship." No, they are not in the upper mountainous regions of Tibet; they are in your backyard. You don't have to go to Warsaw, just look at the Wal-Mart. These families are isolated, lonely, misunderstood, cut off from the social support systems of our society...including the church.

This is a sad truth. We have consulted with many families, either at conferences or via email, who have experienced difficulties or outright rejection from the Bride of Christ. Moms and Dads have been told they are bad parents because their sensory deficient child crashes into his peers or screams because the input is too overwhelming. Autistic children, who do not look different yet do not understand social situations, have been told they are bad in front of their parents and peers. Parents of children with bi-polar disorder or depression have been told their kids are demon possessed. Youngsters with ADD/ADHD or learning disabilities are teased by peers and embarrassed by their difficulties in reading this week's Bible verse out loud. One family has been a part of 10 churches in the past 11 years and has been asked to leave because of their autistic child; ***that father was the pastor of each church!***

We share this with you to make the case for the need for Special Needs Ministries in the local church. No matter how intense the disability, parents with challenged children are with them 24/7 and need some respite. These moms and dads need to be refreshed, filled, and encouraged by the preaching of the Word of Life and by approaching the throne through corporate worship without distraction. They need the opportunity to exercise the gifting of the Holy Spirit to serve the body. And they need all of this with the assurance that their child is not only being loved but also understood by the church's children's ministry. Parents need to know their children will be safe and their unique needs will be met by the lay staff. They need to feel the workers are comfortable with their kids, as discomfort translates into fear in the child or arbitrary rules that may confuse the child. Special parents do not need to be told to stay with their child in Sunday school if they wish to participate, or serve equal time in the nursery for the time their child is in class.

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The Heart of the Matter...

Unreached People Group

(conclusion)

As our family was learning to cope with raising a child with autism, we experienced many of these difficulties. We were finally released from the leash of the nursery paging numbers by a family who, instead of keeping us at arm's length, came alongside us, embraced us, and offered tangible support. They insisted we check our child into the Sunday school room and then give them the security card with the number on it. Then, when the number appeared on the screen, they would go and tend to our child's needs, thus allowing us to continue to worship worry-free. This act took not only love for our child, but a commitment to understand his needs and how to practically meet his challenges. We were freed to worship, be filled, and exercise our gifts as teachers in the Youth Sunday school.

The Bible teaches a model of acceptance for people with physical and/or mental challenges. In the Old Testament, Mephibosheth, the challenged son of King David's best friend Jonathan, was sought out by the King and dined at the King's table. David accepted Mephibosheth as family and met all of his needs until his death. One day, during one of Jesus' many standing-room-only appearances, the roof opened up and four men lowered a mat down to Jesus. The man on the mat was healed that day, not because of *his* faith, but because of the faith of his friends, whose faith led them to take this drastic approach to see their physically challenged companion healed. And in John 9, Jesus is challenged by the religious leaders about a man blind from birth. They asked him, "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that this man was born blind?" Jesus' reply astonished everyone: "Neither". He went on to explain that the man was born blind so that Jesus healing him on that day would give maximum glory to God the Father! All children, typical and challenged, are a reflection of the Father's glory. God did not make a mistake; the parents did not make a mistake; these children are placed on this earth to give glory to God and teach us all a lesson.

A special needs ministry should be built on four cornerstones as a foundation. One, the ministry should be prepared to meet the unique needs of the special child and the family. If the pre-teen with cerebral palsy is incontinent, be prepared to have staff willing to change the diaper, and have new diapers on hand just in case the family runs out of their traveling supply. If the young autistic child has trouble communicating, the staff should be prepared to learn about the special communication system being used by the family. And, when the family that shows up at your church's door has a child with Fragile X Syndrome, be prepared to get on the Internet and connect with the family to learn all you can about this rare genetic disorder.

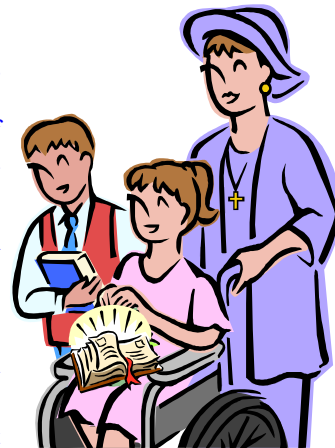
The second cornerstone is a commitment to keeping the child safe. A double door entry into the special needs room will help keep the Down syndrome child with the tendency to run from leaving the room. Other visible safety measures give parents assurance that they can leave their children with confidence.

Third, recruiting a lay staff that will nurture these children through love, understanding, and acceptance, no matter the challenge, is essential. Whether the child in a 15 year old body has the mind of a 5 year old, or the child in the wheelchair drools excessively, these children need the same love, understanding, and acceptance as the cute, bouncy, 7 year old with blue eyes, flowing curls, and the weekly Bible verse memorized properly.

And this brings me to the chief cornerstone: be willing to teach their Spirits. **Just because the mind or body does not function typically does not mean the spirit is not intact.** It is possible to understand much more than they can demonstrate. Psalm 84:11 says, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; **No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.**" (NASB, emphasis added). This Psalm teaches us the Mind, Body, and Spirit are connected. God gave our children everything He intended for them to have in this life. Teach them about their heavenly Father...they can learn!

Developing a special needs ministry opens more doors to ministry to the whole family of the child with challenges. Sunday morning ministries may offer the chance to evangelize the family. An evening ministry one night a month may draw un-churched families from the community who need a night out for mom and dad to nurture their marriage. Contact with these families may help them connect not only with the church, but may open the door to Jesus. A special needs ministry can meet the practical needs of a special family through respite care, helping them at home, grief counseling (not death grief, but the loss of the child they thought they were going to have), and keeping supplies on the ministry site so the family does not have to remember everything. The ideas for how a vibrant special needs ministry can meet the physical and Spiritual needs of these families are limited only by your willingness and openness to the leading of the Spirit of God as He directs your path.

Please do not misunderstand our intention in identifying a "new" **unreached people group**. The unreached people groups in isolated regions of the world are critical in the search to fulfill the Great Commission. Our point is, when Jesus issued the charge to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you", He included our own nation and the people who are disconnected from the Word of Life. He included families of children with special needs. Please pray that the Lord would lay upon your heart, or the heart of your pastor or children's minister, the vision of developing a ministry to the families with special needs. Then, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, your local body can connect the disconnected, understand the misunderstood, care for the lonely, and usher into the Kingdom of Heaven those who have lost their way.



[If your church would like help in casting a vision, developing a ministry plan, training staff and volunteers, or consulting with existing ministries, please contact Texas' Special Kids. We have a heart for developing and nurturing special needs ministries in the local body. We have experience in conducting seminars with churches that are interested in starting such a ministry. Contact us!]

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