

# Disability Awareness Books

## Middle School Resources and Reviews

### **Niagara Falls, or Does It?** by Henry Winkler & Lin Oliver (Hank Zipzer Series #1)

Hank Zipzer is a fourth grader who can't seem to get anything right when it comes to school. He wants to do well, but never spells it, writes it or gets it in on time. His parents think he is being lazy and his principal thinks he is a trouble maker. Thank goodness for Mr. Rock who finds him creative and talented. A funny chapter book that deals with learning disabilities and undiagnosed dyslexia.

**Christian Connection:** This fun and entertaining chapter book focuses on school challenges, true friendships and learning disabilities. Focusing on friendships, this story could coincide with the Bible story found in both the Gospels of Mark and Luke where a man who is looking for help from Jesus is lowered through the roof by his friends.

### **The Summer of the Swan** by Betsy Byars

This Newberry Award chapter book is written about a fourteen-year-old girl who has a brother with developmental disabilities. She gains new insight into herself and her family when the young boy gets lost. The story focuses mostly on Sara and how a sibling of a child with disabilities handles her love for her brother and adolescence.

**Christian Connection:** “*She let out another whoop of pure joy, turned and ran down the hill in great strides...*” Lost and found—the parables of the coin, sheep and lost son, found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. An additional connection could be the Christian picture book **In Jesse's Shoes** written by Beverly Lewis. An excellent book for all ages that can inspire much discussion.

### **Rules** by Cynthia Lord

This Newberry Award chapter book explores the every day and not-so every day lives of twelve-year-old Catherine and her younger brother David. David has autism and Catherine spends years creating rules for David so that he does not embarrass himself in public...or embarrass her! It is touching and heartwarming and shows what true friendship and love is all about.

**Christian Connection:** “*Looking closer can make something beautiful.*” A wonderful reminder that God, who created us and loves us, looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7. Another possibility is to focus on the Bible as a whole. Just as Catherine creates a list for life for her brother, God created a *Book of Life* for us as well.

### **Today's Heroes, Joni Eareckson Tada** by Gregg and Deborah Shaw Lewis

Part of the *Today's Heroes Series* by ZonderKidz, this chapter book gives a close-up and personal look at the life of a creative and innovative woman. At the age of seventeen, Joni had an accident which broke her neck, causing her to lose mobility from her head down. Read how she survived, blossomed and flourished to become part of a wonderful and caring ministry—Joni and Friends.

**Christian Connection:** Joni has overcome more obstacles than most, and yet, she continues to serve God and rely on him. In the Old Testament, Moses also needed to rely on God in order to save God's people, the Israelites.

### **You are Special** by Max Lucado

This is a Christian book about acceptance and God's love for all of His children. Teachers/families can use this book to emphasize disability awareness, diversity, grace and kindness toward all people. It is the perfect story to rework as a play for school chapels and school productions.