

**Key:**

- = Ministry-focused
- = Family-focused
- = Interview

**BREAKOUT SESSION 1 (Friday 9:00a – 10:15a)**

● **What Is the Church's Response to Childhood Trauma? – Michele Maris:** What is the church's response to childhood trauma? This session will cover ACES score, bodies' response to trauma, and practical strategies to help children have successful Sunday experiences. A short overview of trauma-based screening and assessment will be covered. Resources and support will be shared to enhance your ministry to children from traumatic backgrounds.

● **It's Way More Than Just Exercise – Tony D'Orazio:** Tony will share the state of health in the special-needs community, covering the challenges, opportunities, and the single most important thing holding us back. Physical fitness has benefits for those with disabilities, their families, caregivers, and employers. Tony will share what he does here in the Cleveland area to support physical fitness and will give live demonstrations.

● **Shout for Joy: Engaging the Whole Church in Accessible Worship – Karen Roberts:** Do you long to be part of a church community where people of all abilities enter his presence, uniting their voices and hearts in praise and thanksgiving? A church community where the sounds of worship include a wheelchair rolling down the aisle, a tap of a cane, and the sound of people with differing intellectual abilities lifting their voices in praise and prayer? Then this workshop is for you! The workshop will provide biblical foundations and practical strategies for planning and implementing worship services that are accessible and engaging for all. We will consider aspects of preparation and hospitality, components of worship, ideas for accessible worship for children, worship planning, and the blessings of being a church where people affected by disability fully belong and encounter God as the community gathers in worship.

**BREAKOUT SESSION 2 (Friday 10:30a – 11:45a)**

● **Inclusion Environments vs. Separate Environments (What They Look Like and Why You Need Both) – Jillian Palmiotto:** Are you struggling to know what type of environment is best for your families? Should you provide a separate room, an inclusion environment or both? Jillian Palmiotto will share some budget-friendly tips on how to create various environments that can meet the needs of each individual. She will also help you think about how to plan environments that can accommodate continued growth in your ministry.

● **The Special Needs Church as Part of the Gathered Church – Kyle Broady:** Corporate Worship can be difficult for those with special needs. How can we as ministry leaders better engage those who have unique challenges and get them involved in worship? And how can those of us who lead families bring worship into our homes, especially to our family members with disabilities? Through the use of basic tools, best practices, and sensitivity to those in our midst, we can build bridges to individuals and families who are so often left in the margins of our churches and communities.

● **Renovate Church – Victoria White:** A three-part plan for including persons with varied abilities in ministry settings: perspective, participation, personalization. You will come away with inspiration as well as some techniques and tools to include persons of all ages and abilities in a church or ministry setting.

**BREAKOUT SESSION 3 (Friday 1:00p – 2:15p)**

- **ONE: The Ultimate Inclusion – Daniel Turney:** Looking at Paul's letter to the Ephesians, it is clear that God has brought His church together in the beauty of oneness. Unity is absolutely vital to inclusion. Specifically looking at Ephesians 4:1-7, we learn the theology of oneness in the church, and if we get the theology of these seven ones into our minds and hearts, then inclusion is as natural, simple, and beautiful as anything we do as a church.
- **Sensory Rooms That Make Sense – Jenni Wolfenbarger:** Sensory rooms can be costly as well as intimidating to design, but they don't have to be. Participants will learn why they should create a space to meet their students' sensory needs, how to design a space within your budget, and what to do when all you have is a closet or a box. We will also discuss how to transform your curriculum to sensory-based lessons to bring the gospel to life through the senses.
- **Beyond Our Church Walls: Bridging the Gap to Those Affected by Disability – Karen Roberts:** The Great Commission, given by Jesus to his disciples, starts with the word "go" (Matthew 28:19-20). We, as God's redeemed people, are called to go beyond our church walls to help bridge the gap--the gap that all people experience between themselves and Christ (evangelism), and the gap between the church and individuals affected by disability in our community (accessible outreach). This workshop will provide you with biblical principles for this effort and practical ways of applying it.

#### BREAKOUT SESSION 4 (Friday 2:30p – 3:45p)

- **Events for Every Person: How to Make Your Events Inclusive – Christine Pierce:** As the Director of Community and Outreach at Rising Above Ministries, Christine adapts and creates events for the special-needs community and trains churches to become inclusive through events and special-needs classes. Christine would equip leaders with creative ways to adapt their current events to include the special-needs community and talk about new events that can be implemented into their ministry. (Examples of events would be Easter egg hunts, Heroes' Ball, fall festivals, community nights, and story hour.)
- **Supporting and Teaching Children Who are Language Delayed, Minimally Verbal, or Nonverbal – Evana Sandusky:** Children with language delays can sometimes be easy to spot but difficult to fully reach in ministry. This session will help you understand problem areas for those with language delays (ranging from mild to severe) and offer ways to support these children in churches. Different types of visual aids will be discussed as well as the rationale behind them. Ideas for accommodations for these children for common church practices (i.e. memorizing a Scripture) will be offered. Finally, we'll discuss how you can explain concepts of salvation and baptism to those with language delays.
- **Marketing and Branding for Special Needs Ministry – Jillian Palmiotto:** If you are in the beginning stages of launching a special needs ministry, one of the first steps is to understand how to let your community know that you exist to serve them. Join Jillian Palmiotto as she shares how the Unlimited\* ministry has creatively branded and marketed the ministry in the community and ways to bring awareness to disability ministry.

#### BREAKOUT SESSION 5 (Friday 7:45p – 9:00p)

- **Making My Marriage Matter – Joe & Cindi Ferrini:** Joe and Cindi share the practical lessons they've learned over the decades they've been married and have cared for their son with disabilities who lives at

home with them. They want to see marriages be enjoyable, vibrant, and thriving, helping attendees learn how to serve each other and their family member with a disability with excellence and Christ-like love. Learn how to build a thriving (not just surviving) marriage that will go the distance!

● **It's Not Fair! Training Up Exceptional Special Needs Siblings – *Melanie Gomez*:** Siblings of children with special needs are exceptional in their own right and often live a life very different than their peers. Parenting them can be tricky, but you can be certain it is vitally important. Special-needs siblings have a unique and powerful call on their lives. Why else would God provide them such an unusual childhood, if He were not preparing them for the unusual? In this workshop Melanie Gomez will de-bunk the myth of treating siblings fairly and lead you to biblical examples of how our heavenly Father parents us, to provide you with a confident and secure answer to every parenting question that may arise in your special-needs home. Parents, caregivers, and ministry workers will all benefit from this workshop that will empower us to finally fight off the guilt that comes when one child gets more time, attention or resources.

● **Caring for Yourself Now So You Can Still Care for Your Kids – *Jonathan & Sarah McGuire*:** Professionals often tell us that we need to reduce stress and take care of ourselves. We know this, but the suggestions we are given often don't work with our life circumstances and just add to our stress levels and guilt. In this session, parents who have actually been there will share their journey and you will leave equipped with tools and with a plan that will help you be there for your kids for the long haul.

● **Building Better Relationships Between Special Needs Parents and Ministry Leaders: Effective Communication – *Sarah Broady*:** Our children should all have a place at church. In order to accomplish this, we must both prepare our children for Sunday school or youth group, as well as preparing church leaders for our children. For parents of children with special needs who want their child to be able to attend church classes and activities, our advocacy as parents continues from the realm of school to the realm of church. From dealing with difficult church leaders, to talking about the blessing of church leaders who get it and include our children to the fullest extent, we will talk through different strategies parents can use to address a variety of problems or potential issues with their church leaders. Parents will leave encouraged and equipped with ideas to enable their children to be included in their church ministries.

● **Growing the Disability Movement Through Leadership Networking – *Lisa Jamieson*:** It takes Spirit-led, equipped, supported, and well-connected leaders to strengthen our churches for people of all abilities and make Christ known to all. Leaders in Minnesota, Iowa, and Ohio have been developing leadership support communities for sharing ideas, learning about resources, praying for each other, exploring difficulties together, collaborating on programs, promoting awareness, and developing professionally. Their successes and challenges are shaping a duplicatable model for other leaders around the country. Lisa Jamieson, leader of the Minnesota Disability Ministry Connection, shares how their group got started and how it has evolved over seven years. She'll cast vision for why the disability movement benefits from regional leadership groups and give practical tips to guide the launch of new leadership networks.

● **Planning and Implementing a Family Camp – *Beth Castile*:** Families of special-needs benefit from support and encouragement. We need to come along beside them more often than just Sunday mornings. Learn how to provide a safe and fun much-needed camp experience. You will learn why do it, what to include, and how to pull it off. This camp is geared to meet the needs of the moms, dads, and all siblings of all abilities.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 6 (Saturday 9:45a – 11:00a)

● **You are More Than ... - *Sarah Broady and John Felageller*:** In this session, Sarah and John will explore the challenges that special-needs parents face as advocates for their children, dealing with the experiences that most parents have had with the various doctors, specialists, and teachers that have essentially told them that they are only the parent, not the expert. In our session, we will share times

when we had to go beyond our normal role as parents and step into a larger identity to both defend and support our children when given a negative evaluation. We also will empower parents with some practical tips and strategies for how to respond in these situations.

● **Find Your Tribe – *Becky Davidson*:** Life as a special-needs parent can be lonely, but community changes everything. In Find Your Tribe, we will talk about the barriers that special needs parents face in finding community and ways to break through those barriers. Becky will share her personal story of how friends have become family and her lifeline after the death of her husband and now as a solo parent to a son who has profound special needs.

● **Navigating the Transition to Special Needs Adult: Spiritual and Practical Pitfalls to Avoid – *Melanie Gomez*:** We spend about eighteen years being the parent of a child with special needs. What happens when that is no longer our title? There are some very real spiritual and emotional battles to overcome in that transition for parents. This workshop will focus partly on spiritual preparation to be victorious in the next season of parenthood. The other part of this workshop will be practical and advisory in nature. Informing you on the world of special-needs adults, which is very different and requires quite a bit of navigation, research, and action on the part of the parent. Parents of teens and 'tweens, as well as parents of adults, will find this workshop helpful and encouraging. Caregivers and ministry professionals alike can benefit from understanding the heart and reality of the parent whose child is becoming an adult and how to minister to them most effectively.

● **Going from Surviving to Thriving – *Shelly Roberts*:** As a special-needs family, sometimes it feels you are literally just keeping everyone alive and racing from point A to point B all day long. There's a better way! It is completely possible to not only survive but thrive as a family. Shelly will share been-there, done-that strategies, as well as help you see the big picture as you lead your family along your own journey.

● **How to Become a Special Needs Ministry Master Chef – *Jolene Philo and Katie Wetherbee*:** Welcoming families affected by disabilities is a lot like throwing a dinner party—careful planning and a few special "recipes" can make all the difference! Would you like your church volunteers to become special-needs ministry master chefs? This workshop is designed to make that happen whether your special-needs ministry is up and running, just launching, or consists of a few church volunteers who want ALL families to feel welcome at church. Katie Wetherbee and Jolene Philo have cooked up a menu of specific strategies designed to help volunteers beef up space modifications, curriculum adaptations, teaching tips, and effective communication with families. They will walk you through each recipe for success and send you home with a file full of techniques and encouragement.

● **How to Pastor Special-Needs Families – *Lamar Hardwick*:** The Bible provides vivid imagery of the role of a pastor in the local church. Among all of the images used, the image of pastor as shepherd paints a beautiful picture of the importance of the pastoral relationship in the life of the Christ follower. This is especially true for the special-needs community, but often times pastors and church leaders are uncertain of just how to be pastors to the special-needs community. In this session, Dr. Lamar Hardwick will use his experience as an adult with autism and as a pastor of eighteen years to share biblical principles on how pastors can best serve the special-needs families in their church.

## BREAKOUT SESSION 7 (Saturday 11:15a – 12:30p)

● **The Five Phases of Special-Needs Parenting – *Sandra Peoples*.** When Sandra's son was diagnosed with autism she knew exactly where to turn for help and support—her parents, who raised Sandra's older sister with Down syndrome. By observing her parents and the families she has met as the editor for Key Ministry for Families, Sandra pinpointed five phases every special-needs parent goes through. She will share these phases and ways families can move from phase to phase. You don't have to feel stuck! Learn to move from a place of pain to finding your purpose.

- **Faith and the Special Needs Father – *John Felageller*:** John will be presenting on the role of faith in the lives of fathers of special-needs children, specifically those who are new to Christianity or seeking a relationship with Jesus. Using his own experience as a father who was brought to Christ largely because of his son's disability, he will highlight the ways God uses the struggles and challenges we face, especially as men and fathers, to strengthen and grow our faith. John will also detail practical applications of faith in the lives of fathers and explore some different tools that can be used when our faith is tested.
- **All in with the Almighty – *Elizabeth Newman*:** Biblical Truths for Parenting Special Needs Children. Based on the Bible Study: All In With The Almighty written by Elizabeth Newman Author and Speaker, Elizabeth has been speaking at Special Needs and Ministry Conferences for 10 years on God-empowered coping skills for parents, teachers and care givers.
- **Creative Planning for Problem Behavior – *Tiffany Crow*:** When families are welcomed and loved because of problem behavior (such as physical aggression) instead of being ostracized and excluded, lives can be changed. Tiffany will equip ministry leaders and volunteers to help those with problem behaviors feel safe and supported, therefore decreasing meltdowns and aggression.
- **Curriculum Isn't a Dirty Word – *Ryan Wolfe*:** In the church world, there are several things that leadership, if they were honest, would label dirty words: child care, financial campaigns, volunteer recruitment, and curriculum to name a few. These are dirty words because they occupy so much time and energy. They can be downright frustrating too. Curriculum, however, doesn't have to be on this list of dirty words. Curriculum, when done right, can be a blessing and a great addition to ministry programming. Ability Ministry has created an easy to use curriculum for adults and teens with IDD. Ability Ministry is also rolling out a new curriculum for children in 2019. Come to hear about our curriculum and see samples.
- **Understanding Autism: Strategies to Improve Communication – *Cara Daily*:** In this hands-on workshop you will discover what it is like to have a brain with autism. Once you experience the difference between a typical brain and a brain with autism, you will be able to better communicate biblical concepts to individuals on the autism spectrum.

### BREAKOUT SESSION 8 (Saturday 1:30p – 2:45p)

- **Building Family Connectedness – *Lisa Jamieson*:** The special needs of a child add strain to family life and relationships. Siblings wrestle for attention. Couples don't always end up on the same page. Chronic stress and grief bring discouragement. But our families matter to God! Fighting for thriving relationships is one of our highest callings with benefits for our family, the community around us, and generations to come. We'll explore practical ways to strengthen family bonds, increase laughter, experience more joy and rest in greater peace—even when disability threatens to shake up your world.
- **Secondary Trauma and Chronic Stress – *Jonathan and Sarah McGuire*:** Hopeless? Helpless? Anxious? Chronically exhausted? If you can answer yes to a couple of these, you might be experiencing secondary trauma. Through this workshop you will be able to identify secondary trauma in you and your family member's lives and be equipped with tools to combat its effects in the midst of life's challenges.
- **Adapting the Five Love-Languages for Kids with Special Needs and Disabilities – *Jolene Philo*:** Whether you're new to the five love languages or a longtime fan, this workshop offers strategies for identifying the primary language of a child with special needs and ideas for adapting how to speak the love languages to children with a wide variety of abilities and disabilities, including typical siblings. As an added bonus, those attending will learn inexpensive and easy ways caregiving spouses can use the love languages with one another. The workshop is based on more than forty interviews Jolene conducted

while doing research for the love languages book, slated for release in August of 2019, that she is co-writing with Dr. Gary Chapman.

● **Everyone Can Share Jesus! – Mona Fuerstenau:** Supporting those with disabilities to use their gifts, talents, and experiences to share the gospel. Moving people into leadership in your church. Explore tools, learn strategies and take away resources to equip them to share Jesus. Skill building tips to show and share the gospel and develop confidence to begin to develop their strengths.

● **Mentoring Teens with High Functioning Autism – Catherine Boyle**

● **Fresh Hope for Mental Health for Teens and Adults – Brad Hoefs:** Fresh Hope is one way to offer a ministry to those who have mental health struggles. How do the groups work? Who are they for? What does it take to start a ministry within the local church? Come and find out as we look closely at living well, in spite of a mental health challenge!

### QUICK TAKES (Friday Evening)

● **Adapting the Five Love-Languages for Kids with Special Needs and Disabilities – Jolene Philo:** Whether you're new to the five love languages or a longtime fan, this workshop offers strategies for identifying the primary language of a child with special needs and ideas for adapting how to speak the love languages to children with a wide variety of abilities and disabilities, including typical siblings. As an added bonus, those attending will learn inexpensive and easy ways caregiving spouses can use the love languages with one another. The workshop is based on more than forty interviews Jolene conducted while doing research for the love languages book, slated for release in August of 2019, that she is co-writing with Dr. Gary Chapman.

● **How to Pastor Special Needs Families – Lamar Hardwick:** The Bible provides vivid imagery of the role of a pastor in the local church. Among all of the images used, the image of pastor as shepherd paints a beautiful picture of the importance of the pastoral relationship in the life of the Christ follower. This is especially true for the special-needs community, but often times pastors and church leaders are uncertain of just how to be pastors to the special-needs community. In this session, Dr. Lamar Hardwick will use his experience as an adult with autism and as a pastor of eighteen years to share biblical principles on how pastors can best serve the special-needs families in their church.

● **How to Cope and Hope as a Parent of Those with Special Needs/Transitions – Deb Abbs:** As a parent of those with special needs, grief is part of the journey. But so are hope and joy! How can we understand and process our grief during transitional times, yet allow the Lord to use us in the midst of it? Deb will share her experiences and lessons with all of us searching for hope.

● **Reframing Life: Focusing on God When Life Gets Sideways -- Colleen Swindoll Thompson:** Colleen shares honesty, humor, and practical exercises in this presentation intended to help you refocus the way you see life's ever-changing circumstances in light of our unchanging God.

### QUICK TAKES & INTERVIEWS (Saturday)

● **Interview with Janet Parshall**

● **Hope for Everyone in Every Situation – Brad Hoefs:** When you find yourself in the midst of difficulties and circumstances that seem to be overwhelming it's easy to feel like the future is lost, causing

hopelessness to set in. But, the truth is that there IS hope for everyone in every situation. So, how can you have that kind of hope? Well, that's what this quick talk is all about!

● **Interview with Joe and Cindi Ferrini**

● **Ethical and Biblical Decision Making – *Lisa Jamieson*:** Individuals and families affected by disability and chronic illness face moral predicaments and ethical dilemmas. They must decide about participating in drug trials and research studies, supporting "curative" organizations, medicating behaviors, activating a DNR, pursuing guardianship, praying for healing, and more. As Christians, how do we resist cultural collapse when it comes to these kinds of issues? How can friends, family, caregivers, and churches provide support and foster a decision-maker's biblical worldview? We will explore common scenarios using a biblical framework for decision-making that is God-honoring, life-edifying, and peace-giving.

● **Building a Nurturing Ministry to Support the Whole Family – *Beth Castile*:** It's important to provide a safe environment in a place where our families can be spiritually fed. But can we do more? Beth will share several ideas to grow your ministry to support and encourage the whole family and remind them they are not alone—they are loved and they are valued.

● **Interview with Colleen Swindoll**

● **Room to Breathe: Creating and Sustaining Parent Support Groups – *Bronwyn Murphy*:** Authentic support groups can serve as accepting and affirming communities for parents facing the unique multi-faceted challenges of parenting a child with special needs. Support groups are vital lifelines to connecting parents with others in their community as well as the church. Local churches establishing these groups can become places of restoration for parents who have previously felt isolated and excluded. Creating and sustaining support groups for this population provide families a starting place to access valuable resources and a consistent community championing transformative hope. This session will provide practical steps on recruiting and training support group leaders, facilitating groups, growing group membership, and supporting members.

● **Interview with Brad Hoefs**

● **Interview with Marie Kuck**

● **Dear Special Needs Dad – *Becky Davidson*:** Becky will speak straight from her heart to the heart of the dad of a child with special needs to offer encouragement to be the dads and husbands God has called them to be and to be the leaders we need them to be. She will share the importance of their role as the warrior, protector, provider, encourager, and equipper for their family.