



# Kingdom Storytellers

Towards a justice-driven and enabling Community of God

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## What is 'normal' anyway?



### John 4: 9-10

**The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (for Jews don’t associate with Samaritans). Jesus replied, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”**

One of the most profound words spoken to me when I was growing up came from my school’s Headmaster, “Normal? There is no such thing as normal!” It was something he would regularly retort when he heard one of us refer to ‘normal children’ or ‘normal people’ when we described how others looked or behaved. It was a perplexing reply to what seemed

to me to be a reasonable observation given that a great deal of time during my growing up was spent trying to ‘normalise’ me. I was born with a physical disability that meant I would never walk, yet at least one hour of my day involved being made to walk up and down the physiotherapy room at school that was the centrepiece of our school playground. The experience was painful, exhausting and often ended in catastrophe. But at the time, the world I lived in wasn’t ready to make the physical adjustments needed for me to access it, so I had to make the adjustments if I was to live in the world. Thank God for the wisdom of the [Social Model of Disability](#) that eventually evolved.

However, what is ‘normal’ and what is ‘abnormal’, and the question of whether any of us is truly ‘non-disabled’ (and if we are for how long?) was a conundrum I went on to spend the rest of my life trying to unravel. For many, understanding ‘disability’ can only be perceived as an abnormality, which by implication, cannot reflect the true image of God and thus cannot be acceptable to God either. Jesus’ interactions with people who were deemed unacceptable to normal society was a shift that beguiled even those outside of it who craved acceptance. His behaviour towards the Samaritan woman, who may or may not have had a disability, was of active engagement to change the way what she thought was normal in her society and thus her own behaviours and misconceptions. Leaving her jar, the woman went back into that same society and spoke to everyone she met: Jew, Gentile, male, female, disabled and non-disabled. I bet she didn’t do that before she met Jesus!



### REFLECT...

on how Jesus interacted with different types of people? Look at examples in John 4.1-26, Mark 1.40-45, Luke 17.11-19, Matthew 9.10-13.

How is it different to you?



### PRAY...

for more understanding of the peoples God has created, each with their own history, customs, and experience, and the potential they bring to our communities and activities.



### & STEP OUT!

What small adjustments could you make in practice or your behaviour that didn’t require people who are different to fit around in order to be acceptable to you or your community.