Christianity, Sport and Disability: A Case Study of a Father and Son

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The aim of this qualitative case study was to explore the role of sport (specifically long-distance running) in the lives of a father and his son who is congenitally blind and has profound intellectual disabilities. This father and son have participated in numerous long-distance running events together over more than a decade. Their unique circumstances have drawn local attention, specifically in the news media, but no academic attention. Drawing on the well-known and foundational theoretical works of Jean Vanier, Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen and John Hull on the theology of disability, the major themes explored in this study are relational and religious trust, suffering, sacrificial love, embodiment, and blindness. A series of one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with the father, mother, and son, and the resultant transcripts were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Locating the lived experiences of the interview respondents at the center of the analysis, findings demonstrate that sport is an invaluable means of physical, psychological and spiritual development which has the potential to act as a "counter-narrative" and "prophetic incarnational message" to the commercialized world of sport. As such, these findings corroborate with new research done by Watson and Parker related to the experiences and cultural ramifications of sport, Christian theology, and disability.

Biography

Mary Turner is a Lecturer and practitioner in theology and disability studies at Grovetown University, Swaledale, UK. In addition to working in a community for those with disabilities, Mary recently published a book entitled, *Sport, Faith and Disability* (2015, Letters Publishing).

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