



A decorative background featuring several large, colorful circles in shades of yellow, blue, purple, and pink. In the upper right corner, there is a Polaroid-style photograph of two young girls sitting together outdoors in front of a church building with a steeple. The photo has a white border with the text "ME (LEFT) AT 7 WITH MY SISTER" printed at the bottom. The main title "God's Special Plan For Me" is written in a large, cursive, multi-colored font across the center of the page.

God's Special Plan For Me

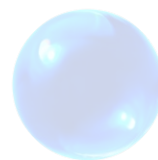
By **Kathleen Bass**

In every season, God is faithful. Over the last several months, these words continue to ring true in my heart and mind. I grew up in Birmingham and have lived here my whole life. From a young age, my parents took me and my two younger siblings to church. Many of my earliest memories are times spent at church with friends and family. I was an energetic child who loved people. I was also a troublemaker who got in trouble both at home and school.

When I was seven, I had a particularly difficult morning at school. My mom was called to come talk to the principal. My seven-year-old life came to a screeching halt. It seems that all the things I had been learning at church my entire life started to click at that exact moment. That afternoon, when I came home from school, was the first time I really felt the weight of my sin. I knew that I had done wrong—by my teacher, my principal, my parents, and God. I remember telling my parents I needed to pray with them right then. I wanted to follow Jesus.

From then on, my life changed. My desires shifted. I wanted to obey God and my parents (although I didn't always do this perfectly!) And I wanted to tell others about what Jesus had done for me. I also wanted to be baptized. I remember sitting down with our children's minister and walking through what it meant to be a Christian and how I could follow Jesus every day. Two years later, I was baptized. My baptism didn't save me, but it was an outward sign that showed my church I was following Jesus.

SPECIAL NEEDS MINISTRY
AT SHADES MOUNTAIN



Growing up, I remember when my family and friends were visiting my grandparents every summer at their lake house in Tennessee, I would plan a VBS for everyone who was there. I learned that I had a passion for teaching kids about Jesus. By the time middle school rolled around, I knew that I wanted to serve the Lord vocationally. That's when I started volunteering with both the children's ministry and the special needs ministry at church. I just loved it.

At the end of middle school and the beginning of high school, I began struggling with unknown health issues and chronic pain. While I couldn't quite understand why God allowed me to encounter these issues at my age, I learned to rely on him more and more in my day-to-day life. At the end of high school, I ultimately decided to go to Samford University so that I could be close to my family due to my health.

The summer after my freshman year at Samford, I spent two months in Melbourne, Australia, interning with the International Mission Board. I worked with a local church and was involved in all different types of ministry—from preschoolers to senior adults. I volunteered in their schools and with their youth groups. I stepped out of my comfort zone—which was working with children in Alabama—to working with people of all ages from all over the world. When I returned to Samford that fall, I was confident in my call to ministry. I knew that God had shaped my life and my story to serve Him and His church.

I immediately switched my major to Christian Ministry and started regularly teaching kids on Sunday mornings.



Disability is a beautiful picture of the brokenness that the world experiences, and the hope we have in Christ.

After four years of college, I thought I was done with school and ready to begin my career. But, I knew that the Lord was guiding me towards further theological education even despite my resistance. And I'm so glad He did.

I started to realize that having a solid theological basis for teaching children about the Bible was vital. Even though I had studied Christian Ministry in college, I could still learn a lot about theology and ministry that would be practical and useful, and I could learn a lot from fellow students in ministry. I began looking for a program where I could specifically study children's ministry and study somewhere other than Birmingham. However, that was not what God had in mind. Beeson Divinity School was where He wanted me to go to seminary.

God used this season in my life in mighty ways. I grew in my knowledge and love of the Lord. I studied Greek and Hebrew. I had the opportunity to study God's Word deeply and to "do life" in community with my classmates. The Lord shaped me during this season and changed my heart. I never imagined that my studies at Beeson Divinity School would lead me to take a mission trip to Asia. I certainly didn't imagine that this mission trip would change the course of my life and ministry. I learned that I not only have a heart for the nations—but also a heart for those with special needs.

In May of 2023, I set off from the Birmingham airport to begin my journey to Taichung, Taiwan. While I was in Taiwan, I spent time with the Hite Family. The Hites' mission focus in Taiwan was to serve college students and families like theirs who were touched by disability. I got to serve in many different areas of ministry while there.



But, my favorite part was getting to "do life" with their family. I was able to see first-hand what life can be like for many special needs families. I came home from that trip wondering if God had shaped my gifts and my story to serve families touched by disability.

At this point, I had reached 10 years of struggling with chronic pain, which had become a manageable, but still difficult, part of my life. I tried to ignore the nudge in my heart about special needs ministry. I told myself that I was not equipped for this kind of ministry. And yet, God equips those He calls. I never imagined that a little over a year later I would be serving at Dawson in this capacity.

A lot of days I feel ill-equipped to serve families touched by disability. However, I know that God has placed me here to serve Him. Disability is a beautiful picture of the brokenness that the world experiences and the hope we have in Christ. How beautiful it is to be a part of a church like Dawson that wants people with special needs to be a part of the church body—God's family of faith. God's Word reveals that every human is made in His image (Genesis 1:26–27) and that we reflect God's character to the world around us (2 Corinthians 3:18). When sin entered the world at the Fall, it caused each of us to experience brokenness in different ways (Genesis 3). Disability draws a unique attention to the brokenness that we all experience.

We see in God's Word how He uses our weaknesses and brokenness to display His power. He also uses these things to accomplish His purpose through us. God promises to heal the world's brokenness and to redeem us from sin through His Son, Jesus. Jesus brings salvation to all people. Those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ will spend eternity with Him.



2024 GRADUATION (HAPPY) DAY



WITH BROTHER (NATE), DAD, MOM AND SISTER (CAROLINE)



God made all people with a purpose—even those with disabilities. In John 9, Jesus heals a man born blind. Before Jesus heals this man, He corrects His disciples' preconceived notions about disability.

Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3).

God's purpose and sovereignty is displayed even through people touched by disability. Despite our brokenness, God will redeem and restore the world—and He uses His people to accomplish this plan! God made each of us for a special purpose to serve Him.

Ultimately, my vision for our Special Needs Ministry is that families touched by disability would be able to fully belong in the life of our church. We want families to be fully present in worship so that they can grow in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We want to see children and adults with special needs to hear the Gospel in a way that they understand. God created each of us with a special purpose to serve Him and to share the Good News of the Gospel with others.

I never imagined that the Lord would use my own experiences, along with my struggles and gifts, to lead me to Dawson to serve with the Special Needs Ministry. But I see His hand in all of it, gently guiding me down right paths for His name's sake. In every season, God is truly faithful.



Kathleen Bass serves as Dawson's Associate Minister to Special Needs. She grew up in Vestavia and graduated from Samford University. Before coming to Dawson in 2024, she completed her Master of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School. Kathleen is passionate about engaging families touched by disability.