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# news release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Joni and Friends Develops Course on ‘A Theology of Suffering and Disability’ for Seminaries and Christian Universities: New Partners to Start Courses this Fall**

**AGOURA HILLS, Calif., June 8, 2010** – [Joni and Friends International Disability Center](#), an organization whose purpose is to accelerate ministry to the disability community, through its [Christian Institute on Disability](#) (CID), has developed a university level course on “A Theology of Suffering and Disability,” which has been adopted by several universities around the country, with more to sign on this Fall.

The first to offer this course was the Biblical Studies Department at Biola University in La Mirada, California. Dr. Kathy McReynolds, Ph.D., Public Policy Director for the Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability and adjunct professor at Biola University, began teaching the course in the Spring of 2007. Other institutions are now offering this course or through a strategic partnership are offering a similar course.

Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., is the most recent university to add the course to its list of program studies. Taught as a one-week Summer intensive, “A Theology of Suffering and Disability” will be offered during the week of August 2-6, 2010. McReynolds will be the professor for this course.

The course is designed to help students answer some of life’s most unanswerable questions: How could a good and loving God allow such evil and suffering: war, poverty, famine, disability? People with disabilities suffer from the evils of the world more than many other people groups. How could God allow this to happen?

In addition, students will be prepared to conduct ministry to what is considered one of the largest underrepresented groups, with more than 650 million people worldwide living with a disability (roughly 10 percent of the world’s population).

“While it is also one of the largest unchurched groups on earth, people affected by disabilities have much to teach us about spiritual transformation,” McReynolds said. “Their specific plight – their sufferings both personally and publically – mirror the human condition and Christian journey in many unique ways.”

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Joni and Friends established the CID in 2007, realizing the Christian community needed a resource regarding life issues in a day and age when the lives of the most vulnerable are under threat. Joni and Friends is passionately concerned about the many issues currently being debated in the medical arena, such as health care reform, stem cell research, reproductive technologies, and end of life care. The CID exists to educate the church on these important ethical concerns.

For more than 30 years Joni and Friends has worked to accelerate ministry to the disability community, offering a wide array of life-affirming ministries to people with disabilities around the world. Joni and Friends does this through the International Disability Center; the CID; international radio and television programs filled with inspirational stories; Wheels for the World, which every year sees thousands of individuals receive wheelchairs and the life-giving message of the Gospel; and Family Retreats held in the U.S. and around the world, where families affected by disability learn that they are not alone. More information can be found online at the ministry's new website, [www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org).

- 30 -

**Note to Editors: For more information about the CID, or to arrange an interview with Joni and Friends representatives, please contact Melany Ethridge of A. Larry Ross Communications at 972.267.1111 or [melany@alarryross.com](mailto:melany@alarryross.com).**