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The Indispensable Members: Reading 1 Corinthians 12:22–25 with Disability Theology for Inclusive Pedagogy in Christian Schools

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji 1 Korintus 12:22-25 melalui perspektif teologi disabilitas untuk mengembangkan fondasi teologis bagi pendidikan Kristen inklusif di Indonesia. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka dan metode hermeneutika analogis, penelitian ini mempertemukan teologi Paulus dengan pemikiran Nancy Eiesland, Deborah Creamer, Thomas Reynolds, dan Brian Brock. Tiga prinsip teologis diidentifikasi: (1) kelemahan tidak meniadakan keanggotaan dalam tubuh Kristus, (2) anggota yang dianggap lemah layak menerima kehormatan lebih besar, dan (3) saling ketergantungan adalah rancangan ilahi, bukan kegagalan manusia. Berdasarkan prinsip-prinsip ini, artikel mengusulkan empat model pedagogis kreatif yang sesuai dengan keterbatasan sumber daya di Indonesia: Universal Design for Learning yang diadaptasi untuk setting berdaya rendah, teknologi asistif murah dan tersedia lokal, pembelajaran kolaboratif berbasis dukungan teman sebaya, serta penciptaan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif secara fisik dan sosial tanpa infrastruktur mahal. Artikel ini juga mengartikulasikan peran gereja dan komunitas Kristen sebagai mitra, pelatih, advokat kebijakan inklusif, dan pendukung praktis bagi keluarga.

Kata Kunci: teologi disabilitas, pendidikan inklusif, 1 Korintus 12:22-25, hermeneutika analogis, sekolah Kristen

Abstract

This article examines 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 through the lens of disability theology to develop a theological foundation for inclusive Christian education in Indonesia. Employing qualitative library research and analogical hermeneutics, the study engages Pauline theology alongside the works of Nancy Eiesland, Deborah Creamer, Thomas Reynolds, and Brian Brock. Three theological principles are identified: (1) weakness does not negate membership in the body of Christ, (2) members perceived as weaker deserve greater honor, and (3) mutual interdependence is divine design, not human failure. Building on these principles, the article proposes four creative pedagogical models appropriate for resource-constrained Indonesian settings: Universal Design for Learning adapted for low-resource environments, low-cost locally available assistive technologies, collaborative peer-supported learning, and the creation of physically and socially inclusive learning environments without expensive infrastructure. The article also articulates the indispensable role of the church and Christian community as partners, trainers, policy advocates, and practical supporters of families.

Keywords*: disability theology, inclusive education, 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, analogical hermeneutics, Christian schools.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Disability remains one of the most persistent yet frequently marginalized issues within both educational and ecclesial contexts worldwide, and Indonesia is no exception. Recent reports estimate that more than 23 million Indonesians, or approximately 9% of the national population, live with one or

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more forms of disability.[1] Although the Indonesian government has demonstrated increasing commitment to disability inclusion following the ratification of Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning persons with disabilities, substantial barriers to educational and social participation remain persistent. Studies indicate that persons with disabilities in Indonesia continue to experience lower educational attainment, limited access to public services, reduced economic opportunities, and enduring social stigma compared to non-disabled populations. Less than half of persons with disabilities complete junior secondary education, while access to inclusive educational environments remains uneven across institutions and regions.[2] Within Indonesian Christian schools and churches, these challenges are particularly acute. Theological affirmations concerning equality, compassion, and the image of God in every person are not always accompanied by inclusive pedagogical practices or participatory communal structures. In many Indonesian Christian schools, students with disabilities experience subtle exclusion through inaccessible learning environments, limited participation in classroom interaction, or assumptions regarding capability and dependence. Inclusion often remains procedural and administrative rather than transformational and participatory.[3]

Despite the growing global emphasis on inclusive education, significant gaps remain in the scholarly literature, particularly within the Indonesian context. Research on disability in the context of Christian theology and education is currently fragmented into three discourses that largely operate independently. First, disability theology has developed as a critical theological movement that challenges dominant assumptions about normality, weakness, embodiment, and human value. Nancy Eiesland argues that Christian theology has often unconsciously privileged bodily perfection and independence, thereby marginalizing persons with disabilities within ecclesial and theological discourse.[4] Deborah Creamer expands this perspective by arguing that limits are a universal human experience, and disability should not be treated as a tragic exception but as a normal dimension of human diversity.[5] Thomas Reynolds emphasizes that authentic Christian community is formed not by exclusionary ideals of normalcy but by the mutual embrace of human vulnerability and dependence.[6] However, as Catherine Webb notes, disability theology is rarely integrated into theological education curricula, let alone into primary and secondary school pedagogy, a gap that is even more

[1] International Labour Organization (ILO), *Disability in Indonesia: Backgrounder* (Jakarta: ILO Indonesia, 2023), 1.
[2] International Labour Organization (ILO), *Disability in Indonesia: Backgrounder*, 2-3.
[3] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 21–27.
[4] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 67–75.
[5] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85–92.
[6] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 108-112.

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pronounced in Indonesian theological seminaries and Christian teacher training programs.[7] Second, Pauline studies on 1 Corinthians 12 extensively discuss the metaphor of the body of Christ, unity in diversity, and spiritual gifts, but scholars such as Richard Hays and Anthony Thiselton focus primarily on ecclesial unity and social status conflicts in Corinth without engaging contemporary disability discourse.[8] Dale Martin has shown that glossolalia functioned as a "high-status indicator" in Corinth, and Paul responded by emphasizing that gifts appearing "weaker" are actually necessary.[9] However, these Pauline studies rarely interact substantively with disability theology or with issues of inclusive pedagogy and Indonesian scholarship that bridges Pauline ecclesiology with local disability inclusion challenges. Third, research on inclusive education in Christian contexts remains focused on policy, physical accessibility, and pedagogical strategies, often without adequate theological grounding.[10] Manfred Pirner proposes the concept of an "overlapping consensus" for inclusive education from a Christian perspective,[11] but he does not develop a specific model integrated with biblical exegesis or adapted to the resource constraints faced by many Indonesian Christian schools. Consequently, these three discourses, disability theology, Pauline studies, and inclusive education often remain conceptually and methodologically disconnected, and this disconnection is particularly detrimental in contexts like Indonesia where both disability prevalence and Christian educational institutions are significant.

This article argues that the metaphor of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:22–25, when read analogically through the framework of disability theology, provides a theological foundation for the development of a creative Christian education model that positions students with disabilities as integral subjects within the learning community, particularly within the Indonesian Christian educational context. By "creative Christian education," this article refers to pedagogical practices that are flexible, participatory, contextually adaptive, and diversity-embracing—moving beyond rote instruction, standardized curricula, and one-size-fits-all assessment toward collaborative, student-centered, and mutually supportive learning environments. Creativity here does not mean artistic expression alone but rather the imaginative reconfiguration of classroom structures, teaching methods, and communal

[7] Catherine E. Webb, "Integrating Disability Perspectives into Theological Education: Transforming the Next Generation of Christian Leaders," *Journal of Disability & Religion* (2025): 3, https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2025.2567255.

[8] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 210–214; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 998–1004.

[9] Dale B. Martin, "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 3 (1991): 558–563.

[10] Victoria Henderina Bathun et al., "Analysis of Inclusive Education in the Christian Context," *Enrichment: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 3, no. 9 (2025): 3556–3558.

[11] Manfred L. Pirner, "Inclusive Education – a Christian Perspective to an 'Overlapping Consensus,'" *International Journal of Christianity & Education* 19, no. 3 (2015): 229–239, https://doi.org/10.1177/2056997115602258.

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relationships so that every student, regardless of ability, can participate actively and contribute meaningfully. It is important to acknowledge from the outset that Paul does not explicitly address disability in 1 Corinthians 12. There is no evidence that the Corinthian congregation included members with physical, intellectual, or sensory disabilities as a category relevant to their conflict over social status and spiritual gifts. The term Paul uses, ἀσθενεῖς (*astheneis*, "the weak"), in the Corinthian context refers to those of low social status, those with a weak conscience (1 Cor. 8:7–12), or those with less spectacular spiritual gifts. Therefore, this article employs analogical hermeneutics, an interpretive method that identifies the theological logic of a text and applies it analogically to a contemporary context that is significantly different. This method is common in disability theology, as exemplified by Eiesland when she reads Old Testament texts about priestly blemishes through the lens of contemporary disability experience. The claim of this article, then, is not "Paul speaks about disability" but rather that the theological logic of 1 Corinthians 12:22–25, that the weaker members are indispensable and worthy of greater honor, can be applied analogically to persons with disabilities in Christian education, including in Indonesian Christian schools where resources are often limited but theological commitments to inclusion are strong.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, it seeks to examine how 1 Corinthians 12:22–25 can be read analogically through the lens of disability theology without committing anachronism and to demonstrate how this reading addresses specific challenges faced by Indonesian Christian schools (such as lack of trained teachers, limited assistive technology, and persistent social stigma). Second, it aims to identify the theological principles that can be extracted from such a reading to build a foundation for inclusive Christian education that is both biblically grounded and contextually relevant to Indonesia. Third, it proposes creative pedagogical models based on this theological foundation, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL) adapted for low-resource settings, the use of low-cost and locally available assistive technologies, collaborative teaching methods that leverage peer support, and the creation of physically and socially inclusive learning environments that do not require expensive infrastructure upgrades. The study also explores the role of the Indonesian church and Christian community in supporting inclusive education through service, prayer, awareness training, and advocacy, recognizing that many Christian schools in Indonesia operate in close partnership with local congregations.

B. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative library research approach combined with an analogical hermeneutical method. Library research is particularly suitable for investigating theological and pedagogical questions that require deep engagement with primary and secondary sources rather than the collection of primary empirical data, given that this study aims to construct a theological foundation for inclusive Christian education by integrating disability theology, Pauline hermeneutics, and pedagogical

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reflection. The analogical hermeneutical method, common in disability theology as exemplified by Nancy Eiesland and Brian Brock, involves identifying the theological logic of 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 within its original context and applying that logic analogically to the contemporary context of disability and education, without claiming that Paul explicitly addressed disability.[12] Primary sources include the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, standard biblical commentaries (Fee, Thiselton, Garland, Hays), and major works in disability theology (Eiesland, Creamer, Reynolds, Brock). Secondary sources include peer-reviewed articles on inclusive education (Pirner, Webb, and Schuelka); studies on disability in Indonesia (Bathun et al., and ILO reports); and pedagogical literature on Universal Design for Learning and assistive technology. The authors acknowledge their positionality as non-disabled Indonesian researchers, with the limitation that this library-based study does not include direct consultation with Indonesian disabled persons, a gap addressed in the recommendation for future empirical research.

The application of this method proceeds through three integrated steps that directly shape the discussion section. First, the theological logic of 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 is identified through close reading of the Greek text and analysis of its socio-historical context, focusing on Paul's argument that yields three theological principles: (1) members perceived as weaker are declared indispensable (ἀναγκαῖος), (2) they are worthy of greater honor (εὐσχημοσύνη), and (3) mutual interdependence is divine design. Second, this theological logic is brought into dialogue with disability theology (Eiesland's critique of able-bodied normalcy, Creamer's universality of human limits, and Reynolds's vulnerable communion) to explore how the body of Christ metaphor can be read analogically for disability in educational settings. Third, the resulting theological principles are integrated with inclusive pedagogy literature, including UDL, assistive technologies, collaborative learning models, and the creation of physically and socially inclusive environments, with particular attention to Indonesian and Global South contexts where resource constraints shape inclusive education. Through this three-step application, discussion develops a theologically grounded and pedagogically practical model of inclusive Christian education in which students with disabilities are recognized as the "indispensable members" that the body of Christ cannot be itself without.

C. DISCUSSION

1. Reading 1 Corinthians 12:22–25 in Its Original Context

To read 1 Corinthians 12:22–25 responsibly for contemporary Christian education, one must

[12] This methodological choice distinguishes the present study from purely historical-critical readings (which would confine the text's meaning to its original context) and from allegorical readings (which disregard context entirely). For a defense of analogical hermeneutics in disability theology, see Eiesland (1994, 70-72) and Brock (2011, 362-365).

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first understand what Paul was addressing in the original context of the Corinthian congregation. The metaphor of the body of Christ is not a timeless ethical principle abstracted from history but a rhetorical intervention into a specific conflict involving social status, spiritual elitism, and the valuation of different gifts within the community. Without attending to this context, the passage risks being misread as a general call for tolerance or diversity, which falls short of Paul's radical claim that the so-called "weaker" members are indispensable, a claim that has direct analogical relevance for how Christian schools understand and honor students with disabilities.

The Corinthian congregation was marked by social stratification and intense competition for honor, a typical feature of Greco-Roman urban associations where status was displayed through wealth, rhetorical skill, patronage networks, and the ability to contribute to civic life. Within the church, this competition manifested most acutely in the hierarchy of spiritual gifts (πνευματικά, *pneumatika*). As Dale Martin has demonstrated, the gift of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) functioned as a "high-status indicator" in Corinth because it was associated with angelic language, esoteric knowledge, and closer access to the divine realm. Those who spoke in tongues likely saw themselves as spiritually superior to those who exercised less spectacular gifts, such as administration, teaching, or acts of mercy (1 Cor 12:28). Paul's response in 1 Corinthians 12 is not to deny the reality of spiritual gifts but to reconfigure the entire framework of valuation: the worth of a gift is not measured by its visibility or esoteric quality but by its contribution to the common good and, more radically, by the honor that the community deliberately assigns to its weakest members.[13]

The passage reads in the New International Version: "On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable (ἀναγκαῖος, *anankaios*), and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor" (1 Cor. 12:22–23). The Greek term ἀσθενής (*asthenēs*), translated as "weaker," appears frequently in Pauline literature to refer not primarily to physical disability but to those of low social status (1 Cor. 1:27), those with a weak conscience regarding food offered to idols (1 Cor. 8:7–12), or those who exercise less publicly recognized spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:22). Gordon Fee argues convincingly that in this context, *asthenēs* refers to members of the body that appear "more feeble" or "less honorable" in the eyes of the Corinthian status-seekers—not because of any intrinsic inferiority but because their function is less visible or less valued by the prevailing social hierarchy. Paul's rhetorical strategy is therefore subversive: he takes the category that the Corinthians use to dismiss certain members (weakness) and revalues it as the very basis for indispensability.[14]

The most crucial term for this article's argument is ἀναγκαῖος (*anankaios*), "indispensable" or "necessary." This term is unusually strong. Paul could have said that the weaker members are "useful"

[13] Dale B. Martin, "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators": 558–563; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 210–214; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 998–1004.

[14] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 619–623.

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(εὔχρηστος, *euchrēstos*) or "helpful" (ὠφέλιμος, *ōphelimos*), both of which would have been polite but ultimately patronizing acknowledgments of the weaker members' utility to the stronger members. Instead, he chooses a word that denotes ontological necessity: the weaker members are not merely useful; the body cannot function without them. Anthony Thiselton notes that *anankaios* carries the connotation of "that which cannot be done without" or "that which is bound up with the very existence of the whole." In the context of the physical body, this is self-evidently true: internal organs such as the heart or liver may seem "weaker" and less presentable than the hands or face, but they are absolutely necessary for life. Paul's point is that the same logic applies to the body of Christ: the members that the Corinthians consider weak and low-status are, in God's design, indispensable to the community's life and mission. This is the theological foundation for the claim that students with disabilities, often perceived as "weaker" in educational settings, are indispensable members of the learning community.[15]

The third key term is εὐσχημοσύνη (*euschēmosynē*), translated as "honor" or "comeliness." In Greco-Roman culture, honor (τιμή, *timē*) was a limited good: one person's gain in honor was another's loss. Paul subverts this zero-sum economy by introducing the idea that the community can actively bestow greater honor on members who would otherwise receive less. This is not a matter of mere charity or pity but of intentional, liturgical, and pedagogical action. Richard Hays observes that Paul's instruction to "give greater honor to the members who lack it" (1 Cor. 12:24) is a concrete ethical directive, not a metaphor: the Corinthian church is to restructure its practices of recognition, leadership, and participation so that the low-status members are visibly honored. This principle has direct implications for Christian schools: they are called not merely to accommodate students with disabilities but to actively honor them through leadership opportunities, public recognition, and the redistribution of participatory roles.[16]

From this exegetical foundation, three theological principles emerge that will shape the remainder of this discussion. First, weakness does not negate membership in the body of Christ. The Corinthians assumed that stronger gifts indicated stronger membership. Paul reverses this: membership is not earned by gift or status but is given by God's arrangement (1 Cor. 12:18, 24). Second, the members perceived as weaker are actually indispensable (ἀναγκαῖος). This is not a metaphor for diversity management but a radical ontological claim: the community cannot be fully itself without the full participation of its weakest members. Third, mutual interdependence (not independence or dependence) is divine design. Paul's conclusion in verse 25 "that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another", grounds the health of the community not in the self-

[15] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 1012–1013.

[16] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 213–214; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 594–596.

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sufficiency of its members but in their reciprocal care and need for one another.[17]

Having established what Paul actually argued in 1 Corinthians 12:22–25, the discussion now turns to the question of how this passage can be read responsibly with and through disability theology. The next part will explain the methodological necessity of analogical hermeneutics, map the structural parallels between the Corinthian conflict and contemporary disability marginalization, and engage the works of Nancy Eiesland, Deborah Creamer, and Thomas Reynolds to demonstrate that the theological logic of "indispensable weakness" speaks directly, albeit analogically to the situation of students with disabilities in Christian schools today.

2. An Analogical Reading of 1 Corinthians 12:22–25 through Disability Theology

Paul did not write to the Corinthians about disability as a category. To claim otherwise would be anachronistic. However, as argued throughout, the theological logic of the passage, that perceived weaker members are indispensable and worthy of greater honor, can be applied *analogically* to persons with disabilities today. Analogical hermeneutics identifies the theological logic of a text within its original context and applies it to a contemporary context sharing a *structural relationship* with the original. This method differs from purely historical readings (which confine meaning to the past) and allegorical readings (which disregard context). Nancy Eiesland reads Levitical prohibitions against priests with blemishes (Lev. 21) not as a direct word about disability but as a text whose logic must be challenged by the disabled God in Christ. Similarly, Brian Brock reads 1 Corinthians 12 as a text whose political logic of inclusion can be extended to disabled members of the body.[18]

Element in 1 Corinthians 12	Original Context (Corinth)	Analogical Context (Disability)
"Weaker" members (ἀσθενής)	Low social status, weak conscience, less spectacular gifts	Students marginalized by able-bodied educational norms
Criteria for devaluation	Visibility, esoteric quality, alignment with status hierarchy	Reading speed, sitting still, auditory processing, independent movement
"Indispensable" (ἀναγκαῖος)	Necessary for the body's functioning	Essential to learning community's full identity

[17] Paul D. Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 578–580.

[18] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, 70–75; Brian Brock, "Theologizing Inclusion: 1 Corinthians 12 and the Politics of the Body of Christ": 362–365.

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Element in 1 Corinthians 12	Original Context (Corinth)	Analogical Context (Disability)
"Greater honor" (εὐσχημοσύνη)	Active redistribution of recognition	Schools must honor students with disabilities through leadership, voice, visibility
"No division in the body"	Rejection of gift-based factions	Rejection of segregation and second-tier participation

Table 1. From Corinthian "Weak" to Contemporary Disability

The structural parallel is the *social logic of marginalization based on perceived weakness*. In Corinth, certain members were devalued because their gifts were less visible or aligned with status hierarchies. Their "weakness" was socially constructed. In educational settings, students with disabilities are similarly devalued, not because of intrinsic lack of worth but because of socially constructed criteria privileging certain abilities such as reading quickly, sitting still, processing auditory information, speaking clearly, and moving independently. These criteria are culturally contingent. Paul's logic, that devalued members are indispensable, applies analogously to students with disabilities.[19]

Reading 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 through disability theology requires engaging the works of theologians who have reoriented the conversation about disability, embodiment, and community. Three voices are particularly significant for this article's argument. First, Nancy Eiesland's *The Disabled God* fundamentally challenged the assumption that disability is incompatible with full participation in the body of Christ. Eiesland argues that Christian theology has often unconsciously privileged bodily perfection and independence, thereby marginalizing persons with disabilities within ecclesial and theological discourse. She points to the resurrected Christ in John 20:27, who shows Thomas his wounds, the marks of his crucifixion. The risen Christ does not have a perfect, able-bodied, scar-free body; he has a body that retains its impairments. Eiesland calls this the "disabled God" and argues that this image subverts the equation of wholeness with able-bodiedness. When applied to 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, Eiesland's insight sharpens Paul's claim: the indispensable members are not merely the "weak" but those whose very embodiment challenges the community's assumptions about strength, worth, and normalcy. In a Christian school context, this means that students with disabilities are not simply "included" as an act of charity; their presence is *revelatory*. They reveal that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:9) and that the body of Christ, including the learning community, is incomplete without them.[20]

Second, Deborah Creamer shifts the conversation from the specific experience of disability to

[19] Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 89–94.

[20] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, 89–94.

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the universal experience of human limits. In *Disability and Christian Theology,* Creamer argues that limits are not exceptional but universal. Every human being experiences limitations in knowledge, in physical capacity, in emotional resilience, and in lifespan. Disability is not a tragic aberration but a particular instance of the universal human condition of finitude. Creamer critiques the tendency of both medical and social models to treat disability as a special case requiring special explanation. Instead, she proposes a "limits theology" that begins with the unsurprisingness of human limits. When applied to 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, Creamer's insight prevents the passage from being read as a text merely *about* disabled people that positions non-disabled people as the norm. Rather, *all* members of the body, including those who consider themselves strong, are limited. The difference is that some limits are socially recognized as disabilities, while others are not. Paul's point that the weaker members are indispensable applies to all members, but it applies *most urgently* to those whose limits are stigmatized, excluded, or rendered invisible. In Christian education, this means that inclusive pedagogy is not a special program for a minority of students; it is a recognition of the universal reality of human limits and the corresponding necessity of mutual interdependence.[21]

Third, Thomas Reynolds develops a theology of *Vulnerable Communion* that directly informs the reading of 1 Corinthians 12:22-25. Reynolds argues that authentic Christian community is formed not by the exclusionary ideal of normalcy but by the mutual embrace of human vulnerability and dependence. He writes: "The church is called to be a community where vulnerability is not a liability but an occasion for grace, where dependence is not a failure but a fact of creaturely life, and where the 'weak' are not merely tolerated but honored as gifts." Reynolds critiques the modern obsession with autonomy, independence, and productivity as measures of human worth. Against this, he proposes an ecclesiology of interdependence in which every member needs every other member. Applied to 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, Reynolds's work shows that Paul's insistence on mutual care (verse 25) is not a secondary add-on to the metaphor of body but its heart. The body's health depends not on the strength of its parts but on the quality of the connections between them. In a Christian school, the goal of education is not to produce independent, individuals but to form a community of mutual care in which each student's gifts are received and needs are met. Students with disabilities are not "burdens" to be managed; they are members whose vulnerability teaches the community what it means to be human.[22]

3. Theological Principles for Inclusive Pedagogy in Christian Schools

The three principles identified above are not abstract assertions. When read analogically

[21] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities*, 85–92, 101–108.

[22] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 108–112, 179–183.

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through Eiesland, Creamer, and Reynolds, each generates concrete commitments for Christian schools.[23] Principle One: Weakness Does Not Negate Membership**.** In Corinth, membership was not earned by gift or status but given by God's arrangement (1 Cor. 12:18, 24). Read analogically, this challenges the practice of ranking students by ability. Those who read quickly, sit still, and test well are treated as "strong" members; those who struggle are marginalized. Creamer's insight is crucial: *all* students have weaknesses, but only some are stigmatized as disabilities. Christian schools must reject any hierarchy of membership based on ability. Every student—regardless of reading level, behavioral profile, or mobility is a full member. This means refusing segregation, rethinking assessment practices, and recognizing that the Spirit gives gifts "as he wills" (1 Cor 12:11), not as the educational system dictates.[24]

Principle Two: Indispensable Members Deserve Greater Honor**.** Paul does not stop at affirming membership; he instructs the community to actively bestow greater honor on less honorable members (1 Cor. 12:23). This requires moving beyond passive inclusion toward *active honoring*. Eiesland's disabled God does not hide his wounds; he shows them. Christian schools should not hide or minimize disabilities. The goal is not for students with disabilities to "pass" as non-disabled. Schools should give them leadership roles, feature their voices prominently, and create opportunities for them to teach peers about their experiences and gifts. As Leow argues, "The church is, ironically, disabled without them." The same is true of the Christian school.[25]

Principle Three: Mutual Interdependence Is Divine Design**.** Paul concludes that the body's health depends on reciprocal care (1 Cor 12:25). In Greco-Roman culture, dependence was shameful; Paul rejects this entirely. Mutual interdependence is not a result of the Fall but part of God's design. Read analogically, this challenges the educational ideal of independence. Students who will never achieve full independence are implicitly devalued. Reynolds argues dependence is not a failure but a fact of creaturely life. Christian schools should measure success not by independence but by the quality of interdependence. This means designing classrooms where giving and receiving help is normal, structuring group work for mutual contribution, and teaching that needing help is not shameful. As Brock argues, every member is an "active giver or conduit of divine love," not reducible to any person's deficiencies.[26] These three principles reject ranking by ability, require active honoring of students with

[23] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, 89–94; Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities*, 101–108; Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 179–183.

[24] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities*, 85–92; Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 108–112.

[25] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, 89–94; Wen-Pin Leow, "The Body Is One: Spiritual Growth, Disability, and 1 Corinthians 12".

[26] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 108–

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disabilities, and redefine success as interdependence. Inclusive pedagogy is not merely about effectiveness or compliance; it is a theological imperative rooted in the logic of the body of Christ.

4. Creative Pedagogical Models for Indonesian Christian Schools

Indonesia has more than 23 million persons with disabilities, yet less than half complete junior secondary education. Many Christian schools operate with limited resources. The temptation is to postpone inclusion until resources improve. This article argues for *imaginative, contextually appropriate action now*. Creativity means low-cost, locally available, relationship-based strategies.[27] Strategy One: UDL Adapted for Low-Resource Settings**.** Universal Design for Learning provides multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement. In Indonesia, multiple means of representation include hand-drawn pictures, real objects, oral reading, songs, and graphic organizers on chalkboards. Multiple means of expression include drawing, speaking, acting, and peer scribes. Multiple means of engagement include offering choices, connecting learning to lived experiences, and using cooperative learning structures. These require technology only teachers willing to rethink practices. UDL's theological foundation is that weakness does not negate membership: models assume "strong" students are full members; UDL designs multiple pathways members from the beginning.[28]

Strategy Two: Low-Cost Assistive Technologies**.** While expensive devices are often unavailable, low-cost alternatives exist (Table 2).

Impairment Type	Low-Cost Assistive Options
Visual impairment	Large-print materials (photocopied), audio recordings (smartphone), tactile graphics (glue, string, raised markers), reading buddies
Hearing impairment	Preferential seating, visual aids and gestures, basic Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO), flashcards
Physical/motor impairment	Slant boards (cardboard/wood), pencil grips (rubber bands), larger pencils/markers, rearranged classroom furniture
Intellectual/learning disability	Manipulatives (beans, stones, bottle caps), task breakdown, checklists, visual schedules, peer tutoring

Table 2. Low-Cost and Locally Available Assistive Technologies.

112; Brian Brock, "Theologizing Inclusion: 1 Corinthians 12 and the Politics of the Body of Christ": 351–376. Quote from Brock abstract, 351.

[27] Victoria Henderina Bathun et al., "Analysis of Inclusive Education in the Christian Context": 3556–3558.

[28] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 179–183; Catherine E. Webb, "Integrating Disability Perspectives into Theological Education: Transforming the Next Generation of Christian Leaders": 7–9.

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The theological foundation is members deserve honor. When a teacher creates a tactile graphic or learns basic sign language, teacher communicates: "You are worthy of effort. You belong here."[29]

Strategy Three: Collaborative and Peer-Supported Learning. Mutual interdependence finds its most direct expression in collaborative learning. Many Indonesian schools are teacher-centered, competitive, and individualistic, communicating that independence is the goal and needing help is shameful. Paul's vision is the opposite. Practical strategies include cooperative learning structures (Think-Pair-Share, and Jigsaw), peer tutoring (including disabled students as tutors in areas of strength), cross-ability grouping, and class-wide celebrations of collective achievement. Crucially, students with disabilities must be *givers* as well as receivers. As Brock argues, every member is an "active giver or conduit of divine love." A student with significant disabilities may give gifts of joy, patience, or presence that are equally essential.[30]

Strategy Four: Physically and Socially Inclusive Environments without Expensive Infrastructure**.** Low-cost physical adaptations include wooden or concrete ramps, rearranged furniture, quiet spaces, and accessible outdoor areas. But social inclusion is even more important—and can be achieved at no cost. Strategies include teacher training on disability awareness, classroom lessons celebrating disability as part of human diversity, school-wide events featuring gifts of students with disabilities, anti-bullying policies, and partnerships with local Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPD). A physically inaccessible school that is socially inclusive is a community becoming what God calls it to be. A physically accessible school that is socially exclusive is a contradiction of the gospel.[31]

Three factors are particularly important. First, teacher training varies significantly; these strategies require minimal external training. Second, class sizes are often large (30-40+ students), but collaborative structures are *more* effective in large classes. Third, stigma remains significant. Christian schools must address this through theological teaching: disability is not a curse, punishment, or shame. It is, as Paul teaches, an occasion for the body to honor its weaker members more abundantly.

5. The Role of the Church and Community in Supporting Inclusive Education

The theological principles and pedagogical models require an ecosystem of support beyond

[29] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, 89–94; Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 108–112; Gregor Wolbring, Dana Mahr, and Rochelle Lamoureux, *Teaching about the Intersectionality of Disabled People Using an Intersectional Pedagogy Framework: A Primer*, 40–45.

[30] Brian Brock, "Theologizing Inclusion: 1 Corinthians 12 and the Politics of the Body of Christ": 351–376; Wen-Pin Leow, "The Body Is One: Spiritual Growth, Disability, and 1 Corinthians 12".

[31] John Kwasny, "How Can the Church Care for Its Disabled Members?" Martina Vuk Grgic, "Rethinking the Complexities of the Body and Disability: Theological Account," *Religions* 15, no. 9 (2024): 1113, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15091113.

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the classroom. In Indonesia, where many Christian schools partner with local congregations, the church has indispensable roles to play.[32] The Church as Partner**.** Congregations can provide financial, material, and human resources. Church members with expertise in special education, therapy, or assistive technology can volunteer. University students can serve as tutors or mentors. But the church cannot outsource inclusion to the school. If the school is inclusive but the church is not, students experience a painful contradiction. Kwasny writes: "The church is not only described as the body of Christ but also as the family of God." The school cannot be inclusive if the church is not. Partnership includes joint training, shared accessibility audits, co-hosted events, and regular communication.[33]

The Church as Site of Training and Awareness**.** Many teachers, parents, and church members have never been taught a theology of disability that affirms the indispensability of weaker members. Instead, they have absorbed cultural attitudes viewing disability as a curse, punishment, or shame. The church must counter these theologies. In Sunday schools, children should learn that God creates every person with dignity. In adult education, members should engage disability theology. In sermons, pastors should normalize disability as human diversity. In teacher training programs, future educators should receive instruction in inclusive pedagogy. Without such training, even well-intentioned teachers default to able-bodied norms.[34]

The Church as Advocate**.** Schools are shaped by policies at local, regional, and national levels. Law No. 8/2016 provides a legal framework, but implementation remains uneven. Churches have moral authority and institutional capacity to advocate for stronger implementation. At the local level, churches can engage district education offices for accessibility audits and teacher training. At the regional level, denominational bodies can develop inclusive education policies. At the national level, church representatives can partner with OPDs to advocate for increased funding, improved data collection, and stronger enforcement. Advocacy is not optional; it is a direct implication of Paul's claim that weaker members are indispensable. The church must move from charity (helping individuals navigate an able-bodied system) to justice (transforming the system itself).[35]

The Church as Source of Practical Support for Families**.** Families of children with disabilities

[32] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability*, 89–94; Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality*, 179–183.

[33] John Kwasny, "How Can the Church Care for Its Disabled Members?"; Victoria Henderina Bathun et al., "Analysis of Inclusive Education in the Christian Context": 3556–3560; Wen-Pin Leow, "The Body Is One: Spiritual Growth, Disability, and 1 Corinthians 12".

[34] Victoria Henderina Bathun et al., "Analysis of Inclusive Education," 3558–3560; Catherine E. Webb, "Integrating Disability Perspectives into Theological Education: Transforming the Next Generation of Christian Leaders": 10–12; International Labour Organization (ILO), *Disability in Indonesia: Backgrounder*, 3–4.

[35] Matthew J. Schuelka, "A Faith in Humanness: Disability, Religion and Development," *Disability & Society* 28, no. 4 (2013): 500–513; ILO, *Disability in Indonesia*, 3–4; Webb, "Integrating Disability Perspectives," 12–15.

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face financial strain, emotional strain, and social stigma. Many feel isolated and exhausted. The church cannot expect schools to bear this burden alone. Practical support includes respite care (trained volunteers giving parents a few hours of rest), financial assistance (funds for therapy, assistive technology, or tuition), emotional and spiritual support (support groups, pastoral counseling), information and referral (directories of accessible services), and practical help (home modifications, transportation, paperwork). Such support is not "social service"; it is the embodiment of Paul's command that "the members may have the same care for one another" (1 Cor 12:25).[36]

The four dimensions of the church's role are interconnected dimensions of a single commitment: students with disabilities are indispensable members of the body of Christ. The church cannot delegate this to the school; it must embody it. Students need a cohesive ecosystem where school, church, and family share the same theological vision. As Leow writes, "the church is, ironically, disabled without them." The same is true of Christian education.[37]

D. CONCLUSION

This article addressed a critical gap in Indonesian Christian education: the conceptual and methodological disconnection between disability theology, Pauline hermeneutics, and inclusive pedagogy. Responding to this gap, the study asked whether 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, when read analogically through disability theology, could provide a theological foundation for inclusive Christian education in Indonesian schools. The exegetical analysis established that Paul's claim about the "weaker" members being indispensable (ἀναγκαῖος) was a radical subversion of Corinthian status hierarchies. Reading this passage analogically through Eiesland, Creamer, and Reynolds yielded three theological principles: weakness does not negate membership, members perceived as weaker deserve greater honor, and mutual interdependence is divine design. These principles were translated into four creative pedagogical models appropriate for resource-constrained Indonesian settings: UDL adapted for low-resource environments, low-cost assistive technologies, collaborative peer-supported learning, and physically and socially inclusive environments without expensive infrastructure. The article further articulated the indispensable role of the church as partner, trainer, advocate, and family supporter.

Addressing the three research objectives, this study first demonstrated that 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 can be read analogically without anachronism by identifying the structural parallel between Corinthian status marginalization and contemporary disability marginalization. Second, it extracted three theological principles grounded in both exegesis and disability theology. Third, it proposed four

[36] John Kwasny, "How Can the Church Care for Its Disabled Members?"; Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 108–112; Victoria Henderina Bathun et al., "Analysis of Inclusive Education in the Christian Context, "Analysis of Inclusive Education," 3560–3562.

[37] Wen-Pin Leow, "The Body Is One: Spiritual Growth, Disability, and 1 Corinthians 12": 368–371; Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God*, 89–94.

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pedagogical models that are theologically grounded, contextually relevant to Indonesia, and accessible to schools with limited resources. The article makes four contributions: integrating three previously disconnected discourses into a coherent framework, providing methodological clarity through explicit analogical hermeneutics, addressing a significant gap in Indonesian scholarship, and moving beyond accommodation toward transformation with low-cost, practical strategies. Despite these limitations, this article has shown that Christian schools embodying the logic of 1 Corinthians 12:22-25 are not merely complying with legal mandates or implementing best practices. They are participating in the very life of the body of Christ, honoring the indispensable members, and becoming more fully what God has called them to be.

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