



"I think the government

regulations for handicapped people are stupid. Our school has ramps and handicapped bathrooms everywhere, yet there's only one wheelchair student among 2,500 kids. It's a waste of money. People like that should go to their own schools and quit screwing up normal people's schools."

17-year-old senior

The Stats

Depression is the leading mental health problem in teenagers.

- ☐ Three to six million children under the age of 18 currently suffer from clinical depression.
- ☐ Thousands of others experience less serious depression, but no statistics exist since most cases go untreated and unreported.

Health—a Wellness Approach (1987); A Parents' Guide to Childhood and Adolescent Depression (1994)

By the Book...

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?...The spirit is willing but the body is weak!"

Mark 14:32-37, 38b

Wheelchair Questions

In her hospital bed Shauna lay motionless. She had never known the meaning of depression until now. Six weeks ago Shauna's life was like Disneyland. She had everything going for her—good looks, great mind, super family. She was a cheerleader, homecoming queen, going out with the captain of the football team, and already accepted at an Ivy League College.

Then her car was hit head-on, and she woke up paralyzed from the waist down. She'd never walk again, the doctors said.

During those first weeks in the hospital, Shauna was the most popular girl in town. Everyone came to visit her, talk with her, stay up with her, do therapy with her. The newspapers did articles about her, local TV stations interviewed her. Friends of hers came by everyday. Her boyfriend, Devon, brought flowers every day for the first week, promising Shauna with tears in his eyes that he would stick with her forever. Being paralyzed would make no difference to him, he said.

That was three months ago, and it had been weeks since Devon had dropped by. He had called once, though, a month earlier. Shauna heard he was dating someone.

Truth is, except for family, Shauna was alone—and probably would be for the rest of her life. Who wants to spend time with a cripple? Who wants to marry a cripple? Who wants to take a cripple anywhere? And where is God, anyway? The drunk who hit her wasn't even injured.

I've been going to church since I was two years old, Shauna thought. I've been baptized, born again—I worked on the last three mission trips. I read my Bible every day. I pray. So what happened, God? I guess it really doesn't matter that I believe in you—really doesn't matter that I gave up so much for you. I guess you don't exist after all.

And Shauna started crying, again.

1. It's easy to criticize Shauna's friends—but wouldn't most kids behave that way?

2. How do you feel about Devon—critical or sympathetic? Why?

3. If you had been in the room when Shauna went off against God, concluding that he doesn't exist, how would you have responded?

4. How would you answer Shauna's questions: "Who wants to spend time with a cripple? Who wants to marry a cripple? Who wants to take a cripple anywhere?"

?