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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Long-neglected disabilities courses gaining popularity**

### **Joni and Friends reaches world with 'Beyond Suffering'**

**AGOURA HILLS, Calif., Aug. 12, 2010** – Because it's a topic that no one seems to want to talk about, studies in the area of disability and suffering have long been neglected in academia. However, [Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability \(CID\)](#) has set out to change that, and is succeeding in creating a movement in this field.

"We just completed our largest course yet, called 'Beyond Suffering,' and are looking at expanding to two summer sessions next year," said course instructor and CID Managing Director Steve Bundy.

"Our goal is to transform the view many Christians have about disability ministry," Bundy continues. "We're finding a hunger among the students, as well as leaders, to understand God's plan for suffering, which is creating a grass-roots disability ministry movement around the world. This year alone we've led courses in seven countries."

Held for the third year at the [Joni and Friends International Disability Center](#) headquarters in Southern California, this summer's course was attended by 53 students representing 16 states and four countries. The class size overflowed the facility's training space, prompting the discussion about a second offering of the course next year.

The 32-hour course was taught by the [Rev. Steve Bundy](#), [Dr. Jeff McNair](#), [Dr. Kathy McReynolds](#) and the Rev. James Rene and included: 1) Overview of Disability Ministry, 2) Theology of Suffering and Disability, 3) The Church and Disability Ministry, and 4) Introduction to Bioethics. Students who complete the assignments and practicum receive a Certification in Disability Ministry from the CID.

In addition to the annual summer offering of the course at Joni and Friends, the CID has partnered with several universities and seminaries in developing curricula for similar courses around the country, including Biola and Liberty Universities and Dallas Theological Seminary. In 2011, "Beyond Suffering: Christian Views on Disability Ministry" will be offered by several Joni and Friends area offices and eventually, on-line.

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Joni and Friends International Disability Center serves the disability community through a wide array of life-affirming ministries to people with disabilities around the world, including international radio and television programs featuring inspirational stories. Wheels for the World enables thousands of individuals to receive wheelchairs and the life-giving message of the Gospel. Every year families affected by disability learn that they are not alone when they attend Family Retreats across the U.S. and around the world. The Joni and Friends Christian Institute on Disability equips the Christian community to engage in bioethics and value of life issues. 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 Joni and Friends, please visit [www.joniandfriendsnews.com](http://www.joniandfriendsnews.com). To arrange an interview with Joni and Friends representatives, please contact Melany Ethridge at 972.267.1111 or via e-mail at [melany@alarryross.com](mailto:melany@alarryross.com).**