

Shadow Christians

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Lesson Title: “We Do the Dirty Work” (pp. 180-192)

Session 13

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The main point of this lesson is: Shadow Christians do the dirty work of ministry.

Focus on this goal: To help adults consider themselves candidates for dirty work in ministry

Key Bible Passage: Matthew 8:14-16; Acts 9:22-30

Before the Session

1. Watch a few clips from programs showing people doing dirty jobs; prepare a short clip to show to the class. (Step 1)

2. Be ready to summarize Acts 23:12-35. (Step 4)

3. Have available information so you can help any would-be dirty job volunteers to the right contact person. (Step 7)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Show the clip of a person doing a dirty job. (OPTION: Share a time you worked a job in which you got absolutely filthy or invite a volunteer to share such a story. If no one volunteers, suggest raising infants or toddlers could qualify!) After a brief discussion of dirty jobs, say: Today’s session from Shadow Christians is going to help us see what it means to perform the dirty work of Christian ministry.

Step 2. Doing Dirty

Turn the conversation to dirty jobs in a family. Use the opening paragraph of Day One (p. 180) to consider the humorous situation the author and his wife found themselves in as parents. Say: There are dirty jobs in a church, too.

Read the list of tasks to be done in the first sentence of the second paragraph (p. 180), inviting learners to raise a hand if they’ve ever performed (or currently perform) one of these “dirty jobs.” Read the third paragraph (pp. 180-181) and say: Today, as we consider the Bible’s teaching on this topic, I want you to ask yourself if you are willing (and perhaps even already volunteering) to do the dirty jobs of ministry.

Step 3. Providing Hospitality

Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 8:14-16. Say: You’ve probably heard this story, and we celebrate Jesus’s miracle. But let’s also consider Peter’s mother-in-law; what do you observe about her? What do you infer?

Engage learners in reflecting on people who have a heart for hospitality and how that ministry can impact the kingdom of God. Share the story of Inez from Day Two (p. 182) or a similar example of someone in your own church.

Read the last Day Two paragraph (p. 183) and say: You are probably one of those shadow Christians. I need to take this opportunity to say thank you.

Step 4. Protective Services

Request a volunteer read Acts 9:22-30. Ask: In these short nine verses, how many times did a group try to kill Saul (Paul)? (Twice) Who was it trying to kill him? (Jews!)

Use the Day Three content (p. 183) to point out that people in ministry, church property, and personal property of people in the church all often need protecting today. Take a moment to identify who serves as the eyes and ears of your congregation as people are worshiping, discipling, and fellowshipping.

If time permits, read (or summarize) Acts 23:12-35 about the courageous act by Paul’s nephew. Challenge learners to pray for safety, not only for the spotlight Christians but for shadow Christians watching out for others’ safety.

Step 5. “We Do What’s Next”

Invite a volunteer to read the third Day Four paragraph (p. 186). Repeat the Day Four Note (p. 186). Explain that this is the essence of dirty work for shadow Christians: they don’t choose what they like to do or what their preferences are; they do what needs to be done.

Invite a volunteer to recount the basic idea of the miracle of Jesus turning water to wine. Read John 2:5-8. Engage learners in reflecting on the servants, the shadow characters of the story. Discuss their willingness to do hard, dirty work (see p. 187 for details) and point out the miracle that came about through their sacrifice.

Step 6. Cleanup Crews

Briefly overview the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:10-17), then read Luke 9:16-17 aloud. Point out the work of the disciples: serving a meal to a large crowd and picking up the leftover pieces after everyone else was finished. As a group, discuss the role of cleanup crews, reading the second paragraph of Day Five (p. 188). Together, brainstorm and plan how your group can help clean up after a function in the near future.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read James 4:10, pointing to James’s instruction to humble ourselves. Lead a time of quiet reflecting, pointing out that all the dirty jobs you’ve discussed today are great opportunities to humble yourselves before the Lord.

Close in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to direct each participant to be an humble, dirty, shadow Christian.

After the Session

Contact participants, particularly those who might have been absent from the group this session, and remind/inform them of plans to clean up after the upcoming function. Be sure to include the date, time, location, and any other relevant information and ask group members to add the date to their calendars.

