

Shadow Christians

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Lesson Title: “God Loves Us Tenderly” (pp. 112-125)

Session 8

January 14, 2024

The main point of this lesson is: Jesus demonstrated His tender love through the way He treated children and their parents.

Focus on this goal: To help adults realize that being a shadow Christian doesn’t diminish God’s tender love for them

Key Bible Passage: Mark 10:13-16

Before the Session

1. Label a board or large piece of paper with the names of five or six immensely famous people, letters scrambled. (For example, SILEV LEPERSY is Elvis Presley.) Make the last name not a famous person but a servant-hearted person in your church. (Step 1)

2. Read Mark 9:33—10:12 as background for the focal passage. (Step 2)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Explain that the names of notable people are scrambled on the board. Engage learners in deciphering the names and saying them out loud. After adults have unscrambled all the names, ask why the church member’s name is included. Say: Today, we’re starting a new study, Shadow Christians, which helps us see people who live out of the spotlight yet still live mightily for God. Give a brief overview of the book using the Introduction (p. 111).

Step 2. Does God Love Me?

Read the opening paragraph of Day One (p. 112) and invite learners to share their answers to activity 2 (p. 113). Summarize the following paragraphs (p. 113) in your own words, explaining God is holy *and* God is also love.

Share a time when you were disciplined (by a parent, teacher, coach, etc.) in such a way that you felt condemned at the time, but now see the love in that authority’s actions.

Say: Today’s study looks at the fact that God loves us tenderly*.* Invite volunteers to share the mental images that come to mind when they think of something being tenderly loved.

Step 3. Welcoming Children

Invite a volunteer to read Mark 10:13-16. Point out that this scene began in Mark 9:33, and identify the serious topics of discussion that preceded the focal passage. Say: Some would say this was “serious” talk and no place for children. What did Jesus show?

Use Day Two content (p. 114) to stress that there was no childcare and children would have certainly been part of the crowd. Ask: Do you think the disciples expected Jesus to agree with their directive toward the children? How was Jesus’s attitude toward children different from that of His disciples?

Point out kingdom implications of being like children and receiving children, not only in theory, but with our words, hands, and arms.

Step 4. Caring for Hurting Children, Part 1

Read John 4:46-54. Use Day Three content (pp. 116-117) to give context and background on the passage. Challenge learners to imagine themselves in the father’s place (and likely the mother’s back home!) and the sense of desperation. Point out that this man was not a follower of Jesus at the time of healing; still, Jesus showed tenderness and compassion.

Step 5. Caring for Hurting Children, Part 2

Invite a volunteer to read Mark 9:14-29. Use the opening paragraph of Day Four (pp. 118-119) to add insight to the passage.

Readthe Day Four paragraph (p. 119) that begins, “Not much is known . . .” and urge learners to go out of their way to show love to people who are hurting since we are the hands and feet of Christ!

Invite a volunteer to read Luke 7:13-15. Use Day Four content (pp. 119-120) to describe the widow’s dire situation, pointing out that she did not know Jesus or even ask for help.

Step 6. The Children Effect

Briefly recount the author’s story of a well-known Christian speaker transforming into a goofy guest in the presence of the author’s young son (Day Five, pp. 120-121). (Or, if you have a similar story, share that!)

Engage learners in describing how they have seen people exhibit personalities in the presence of a small child that they might never have expected. Stress that while God is holy and majestic, we are His children, and He delights for us to be near Him! Help learners see that our holy God also tenderly and affectionately loves us.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Invite someone unafraid of leading in singing to lead your group in the first verse of “Softly and Tenderly” (or another song that focuses on God’s gentle love for us if that hymn is not known).

Read the Day Five paragraph (p. 122) that begins, “Will Lamartine Thompson . . .” as well as the paragraph that follows.

Close in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to help us all experience God’s tender love this week.

