

Shadow Christians

Author: Jeff Iorg

Lesson Title: “God Values Us Highly” (pp. 126-139)

Session 9

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The main point of this lesson is: Shadow Christians, not just highly visible and prominent believers, are highly valued by God.

Focus on this goal: To help adults identify why God highly values them

Key Bible Passages: Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:4-10

Before the Session

Bring two similar items you have in your home, one of which is highly valued by its purchase price and the other highly valued because of sentimental reasons. (For example, you may have a $50 pottery plate and a plate that belonged to your grandmother but is monetarily worth practically nothing.) (Step 1)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Display the two similar items you brought from home. Briefly tell the story for each and give its resale value. Ask: If I realize there is a fire in my home and I have time to grab only one, which one do you think I’ll choose?

As a group, consider the idea of value, what it means to value something, and why we value some items apart from their monetary equivalent. Say: In today’s passage, we’re going to consider the value God assigns to shadow Christians.

Step 2. Theology Informs Practice

Read the impactful statement the author received in seminary (p. 126): “Theology informs practice.” As a group, evaluate this statement, both in theory and in practice. Read the sentence from the first Day One paragraph (p. 126) that begins, “Those words . . . .”

Invite a volunteer to recall the definition for shadow Christian (believers “work in the shadows created by the spotlight shining on others,” p. 111). Use Day One content (pp. 126-128) to point out that we can glean much insight and even theological understanding by looking at the shadow Christians and theology in the Bible that seems to be hidden in plain sight.

Step 3. A Kingdom of Priests

Read: “The first theological concept establishing the importance of shadow Christians is the priesthood of believers” (p. 128)*.*

Invite a volunteer to read 1 Peter 2:4-10. Ask: Did you see Peter tell us—all believers!—that we are priests or a priesthood? How many times did he tell us that? (Two, vv. 5,9.) Use the Day Two opening paragraph (p. 128) to explain the function of priests and the delineation between Jesus as our high priest and our role as priests.

Help learners see that all Christians have equal standing before God; we are called to represent and glorify Him in all we do. Challenge learners to carefully consider their own active ministries and consider whether or not they are living all aspects of their lives as ambassadors or if they’ve abdicated that to someone else.

Step 4. Everyone Is Gifted

Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:11-12. Explain that there are two additional passages that specifically mention spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:6-8). Instruct learners to turn to one of these additional two passages and call out any gifts not directly addressed in Ephesians 4.

Use the content in the first two paragraphs for Day Three (pp. 130-131) to briefly explain that we all have a gift (or several!) and the gifts are meant to be used together for each other.

Brainstorm what would happen in a congregation that didn’t have shadow Christians serving in positions out of the limelight: administrating, caring for children, keeping rooms clean, and so forth.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6,22-24, encouraging participants to find honor and unity in one another’s gifts.

Step 5. The Nature of the Church

Invite a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:8-9. Use the content from the first Day Four paragraph (p. 133) to explain the old statement: “The ground is level at the foot of the cross.” Impress strongly that grace is the only reason any of us come to Jesus; but He also made us to do the good works God prepared for us to do.

Ask a volunteer to share how he/she works around the house and how it’s a “good” work even if it’s hard, unappreciated, or repetitive. Ask: How does this help us understand our works for the Lord? Dare learners to take stock of their God-ordained, not self-ordained, work this week, seeking God’s direction and power.

Step 6. A Leader’s Focus

Call on a volunteer to re-read Ephesians 4:11-12. Point out that the passage was read earlier (Step 4) to see the list of spiritual gifts, but this time emphasize that some gifts equip others for the work of Christ, building up the entire body.

Read the following statement: That’s not my job; the preacher is supposed to do that. Ask: Have you ever heard anyone say that or something similar? How does Ephesians 4:11-12 address that kind of statement?

Mention that Moses is seen as a pillar of faith, but Jethro actually helped him to be a great leader. Read Exodus 18:19b-23. Help learners consider its application for their own lives.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Instruct learners to look to a neighbor and say, “You are highly valued by God.” Remind adults of what the author told us at the beginning of this lesson: “Theology informs practice.” Stress: We’ve studied the theology today that we are all highly-valued for service to the Lord. Will we practice it this week?

**Close in prayer.**

