



What does the phrase “priesthood of the believer” mean to you? How do you feel about the idea that we are all ministers, called to share the love of Christ?

Adult to Small Child

Read: Acts 13:1-3.

Reflect: This brief story of the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul is a reminder that some people are given a special calling for a particular ministry. Here we read that the Holy Spirit sets the two of them apart for a special work. The community supports them by laying hands on them and sending them out.

Respond: Who in your community has been set apart for ministry? Perhaps it is a Sunday school teacher or pastor. This week take time to lay hands on these leaders, whether literally or figuratively by offering a card or note of appreciation. For small babies, give the gift of a handprint or footprint on a card for nursery teachers and helpers.

Adult to Elementary Child

Read: Acts 11:19-30

Reflect: In chapter 11, it’s clear that from the very beginning of the church, there were arguments about who was “in” and who was “out.” Peter comes to understand that the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, and it’s not up to us to decide who belongs. “Who am I to stand in God’s way?” Peter asks. God is doing new things in this chapter, and God is still doing new things, “changing hearts and lives.” As followers of Jesus, our job is to include, not to exclude, to draw a wider circle, to make the kingdom grow. As humans, though, we sometimes have trouble doing just that.

Respond: Tell about a time when you were left out, and what that felt like. Has there been a time when you were able to bring someone in? Read *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, a picture book with a powerful lesson about inclusion, and how our actions ripple out into the world.

Adult to Youth or Young Adult

Read: Acts 10:44-48.

Reflect: In Acts 10:44-48, Peter recounts his witness of Gentiles experiencing the Holy Spirit. The other circumcised believers were “astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.” *Even* on the Gentiles. In the early church, there was disagreement about who could be included among Jesus’ followers. Some early Christians, who were Jewish, believed that in order to be a Christian, you must be circumcised, as Old Testament Law required for God’s people. But this story is a major turning point, as God shows these followers that there are no prerequisites for the Holy Spirit’s presence in a person’s life. Unfortunately, sometimes churches think a lot like those early circumcised believers and create lists of requirements for people to qualify to be a part of Christ’s church. Luckily, Christ does not.

Respond: Are there people you know who have been hurt by the church? Are there people you know who have been rejected by a church? Write their name on a piece of paper and keep it in your pocket or wallet. The truth of Easter is that God is alive, everywhere! Pray for God’s Spirit to show up in their lives. Think of ways in addition to praying that you can show them Christ’s love, even if they feel unwelcome at a church.

Adult to Adult

Read: Acts 12:1-9.

Reflect: In Acts 12:1-19, we read that Peter was busted out of prison by the Lord’s angel. At first, he thought he was dreaming but only later realized what had happened, that the chains had in fact fallen off, and he had escaped! Sometimes we only see God’s provision in the rear view mirror, sometimes parts of our story only make sense in hindsight. And yet, God is always with us, the Spirit always moving within our lives.

Respond: Begin this time by reflecting on a time when you were unable to see God’s presence in the moment, but recognized it later. Next, ask yourself “Are you ignoring a call from God because it feels too risky in the present?” If so, list three disadvantages to taking that risk. Then, list three advantages to taking the same risk. Imagine yourself on the other side of this risk - where might you see God? Sit in prayer about how best to proceed.

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