

Lesson 3

The value of a person is determined by God, not by popular opinion.

Each student will—

- Know that God determines our value
- Feel secure in her own worth and determined to agree with God on the value of others
- Participate with the class to respond to questions about value

Outline

1. Our value as determined by society
2. Our value as determined by God
3. Learning to value ourselves and others as God does

Connections

Middle school students are plagued by questions about their own value. And in response to their own self-doubts, they question the value of others, too. These unanswered questions are at the root of many teenagers' poor decisions and unhealthy behaviors. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to evaluate whether or not the cultural system for determining value is accurate. As they find it faulty, they'll discover that God's determination of value has nothing to do with characteristics or capabilities. Therefore, they can be at peace knowing that all people have value to God. This lesson plan gives students an opportunity to practice affirming the value of another person, which will help them to affirm their own value as well. Understanding and experiencing the value of life will be the foundation for each student making life-giving decisions.



Materials

Magazines (a short stack for each student)

Chalkboard or Whiteboard

Chalk or Whiteboard Markers

Dead Sea Scrolls Handouts (one for each student)

Answering Questions about Value Handouts (one for each student)

Pencils

Class Outlines

Bibles



Making an Entrance

Begin by saying—**One question that we all ask is “Am I good enough? Do I have value?” We may not ask it out loud, of course, but it’s something we all deal with at one time or another. Let’s take a look at some of society’s most admired people.**

1. Our value as determined by society

Pass out magazines containing pictures of well-known people. Ask students to spend five minutes looking through them while asking themselves these two questions:

- Who are the people most admired?
- What about these people draws admiration?

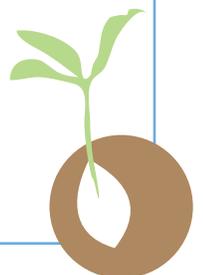
After the five minutes are up, ask students to share what they discovered. As they do, write on the board the names of the admired people and the reasons they’re admired.



Informing

Say something like—**Most of these reasons for admiration fall into one of two categories: capabilities and characteristics. We have a tendency to measure the value of a person based on what they do and how they appear. We clearly see how true this is based on the people we admire in our culture.**

Let’s think about this for a moment. Is this how it *should* be? Should I measure my own value based on what I look like and what I can or cannot do? Is the value of other people in my world determined by what they look like or what they can or cannot do?





Discuss these questions with the class:

- If I feel good about myself based on how attractive I am or how I perform at school, in athletics, or with some other talent, then how is that perception going to affect my life?
- If I evaluate others based on how attractive they are or how impressive their talents or abilities are, then how will that perspective affect the way I relate to other people?

2. Our value as determined by God

Say—Let’s see if we can get a glimpse of the way God sees and values us. Ephesians 1:4, 11–12 (MSG) gives us insight into God’s intentions as He created us—

3–6 Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.... 11–12 It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

Discuss:

- According to this passage, when did God decide that He loves us?
- What were His hopes for our lives as He created us?

Say—In the last lesson, we talked about the flow of God’s love in and among the three Persons of the Trinity and the creation of human beings as an overflow of that love. We see this truth again in the Ephesians passage. God created us in His own image with the intention of revealing Himself and His love through us. Therefore, as people created in God’s image, each of us—as persons expressed through our bodies—makes visible something beautiful about the invisible God.





Discuss:

- Based on all that we've talked about today, what makes you a person of value? After some of the students have shared their thoughts, say—**You are a person of value because:**
 - **God created you.**
 - **God created you in His own image.**
 - **God reveals something beautiful about Himself in you.**
 - **God decided to love you before you were ever created.**
 - **God has plans to adopt you into His family.**
 - **God has plans to lavish His love on you.**

3. Learning to value ourselves and others as God does

Let's look at a story that illustrates how easy it is for us to be mistaken about true value.

Distribute copies of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** handouts to the students so they can follow along as you read the story aloud. After you've finished reading, they should work individually to answer the four questions at the bottom of the handout.

Dead Sea Scrolls: Wisdom of the Ancients Is Delivered to Modern Scholars

There isn't that much to do in the desert while tending goats and sheep. Khalil Musa, Jum'a Muhammad Khalil, and their younger cousin, Muhammad Ahmed el-Hamed, often had time to spare, to joke around, sometimes do a little exploring. Perhaps they would talk of the many prophets, representing many religions, who found inspiration in this area.

But one winter evening in 1947, or perhaps it was 1946, since almost nothing in this story is without dispute, Jum'a discovered two small openings in the side of a rock face. He threw a rock into the smaller of the two holes and, surprisingly, heard what sounded like the dull crack of breaking pottery.

Jum'a called the other two over to the holes and told them what he had heard. Their interest was piqued, but night was falling and the flocks were in desperate need of water. They knew they had to keep moving. Two days would pass before the three men had time to return to further examine what kind of hidden treasure might be inside the cave.

It was the youngest, Muhammad Ahmed, who was the first to return. Early in the morning, while his elders still slept, the teenager squeezed through the larger hole to enter the cave, located near the ancient ruins known as Qumran.





“As his eyes became accustomed to the dim light, he saw about 10 tall jars lining the wall of the cave,” according to American scholar John Trever, who was one of the first to interview the Bedouin men, as documented in his book, *The Untold Story of Qumran*.

When Muhammad returned to tell the others of his discovery, they became angry that he had gone to the cave without them—likely, Trever reported, because they feared he might have hidden anything valuable. The teenager’s nickname, after all, was “edh-Dhib,” the wolf.

The three Bedouins returned to the cave and, after Muhammad squeezed in again, recovered anything they judged worth carrying. All but two of the jars, Trever said the shepherds told him, were empty. They found broken pottery all over the cave floor. The Bedouins eventually came away with two bundles wrapped in cloth, covering two parchment scrolls, and one leather scroll without a cover.

They had no idea what they had discovered...

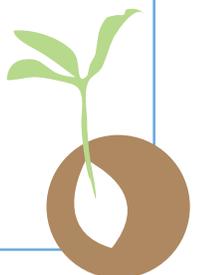
Back in 1947, after the three Bedouins had retrieved the scrolls from the cave near Qumran, they returned to their tribal camp southeast of Bethlehem. Unaware of the significance of their booty, they hung the scrolls on a tent pole. There, the documents suffered damage from the elements—sacred words cast by the wind back into the desert.

The Bedouins eventually took the scrolls to several antiquities dealers, some who rejected them as worthless, before finding a cobbler who agreed to have them examined by someone from the Syrian Orthodox Church. He thought the language of the scrolls was “Syriac”—an ancient language.

An archbishop in the church, Athanasius Samuel, examined them and, believing them to be authentic, agreed to buy them. These would later be identified as the “Isaiah Scroll,” the “Manual of Discipline,” and “Commentary on Habakkuk.”

As this sale was being negotiated, the Bedouins returned to the cave and found four more scrolls that they later sold, along with some of the jars, to a different dealer. These eventually came to the attention of an archaeologist at Hebrew University, Eleazar Sukenik, whose son, Yigael Yadin, purchased two of them—the “Thanksgiving Hymns” and the “War Scroll.”

Despite the growing market for scrolls, the going price early on was a pittance—often the equivalent of less than \$25 a scroll, and sometimes less than \$10...





As word spread of these strange old scrolls, Sukenik and Samuel soon learned of each other. At a meeting in February 1948, the Israeli archaeologist immediately recognized that the scrolls held by the Syrians were similar to those he had purchased from the dealer.

It is at this point that the American John Trever got involved. The Syrians asked Trever and other experts at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem to evaluate the scrolls. The Americans agreed, assuming it would be merely a gesture. Surely, these scraps would turn out to be weatherworn recent documents of little value, or just plain forgeries.

But, of course, they were nothing of the kind. As more experts got involved, looking over photographs if not the actual scrolls, it became impossible to deny the stunning nature of the discovery...

In one odd turn of events, the Syrian Archbishop Samuel moved to the United States and, in 1954, placed an ad in the *Wall Street Journal* offering to sell four Dead Sea Scrolls. Sukenik's son, Yadin, heard of this and, working with private philanthropists and, secretly, the Israeli government, bought the scrolls and returned them to Israel. The price: \$250,000.

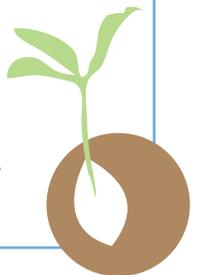
Adapted from Tom Paulson and John Iwasaki, "Dead Sea Scrolls: Wisdom of the Ancients Is Delivered to Modern Scholars," [seattlepi.com](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/285572_deadseatabmain.html), September 20, 2006, http://www.seattlepi.com/local/285572_deadseatabmain.html.

After the students have had some time to answer the questions, say something like—**Christians recognize that these scrolls are priceless. The scrolls confirm the authenticity and accuracy of our Bible, which we believe to be God's message of truth and love to the human race.**

Now discuss the questions on the handout:

1. What was the first evaluation of the worth of these scrolls?
2. What was the likely dollar "value" placed on these scrolls by Yigael Yadin?
3. What value did the Israeli government place on the scrolls when they bought them after experts confirmed they were more than just dusty old scrolls found in a cave?
4. How much would you guess you'd have to pay for them now if you wanted to purchase them from the government of Israel?

Now say—**So as we talk about value, consider how those people who didn't understand the true worth of these scrolls paid only \$25 for them, yet the scrolls' real value is priceless. In the same way—although the world may look at you or me and evaluate our**





value on the basis of how we look or what we can or cannot do, God is the one who knows our true value. And we have to agree with Him that we are priceless because, after all, God is the expert.

Ask—Can our value in God’s eyes be affected by the way we look, by what we can or cannot do, or by what other people think of us? Why or why not?

Can we determine that someone has limited value based on what that person can or cannot do or based on his or her appearance? Why or why not?

What God says about you is the *truest* thing about you. We must learn to look at ourselves and at others through God’s eyes if we want to know true value.



Valuing

Distribute copies of the **Answering Questions about Value** handout. Ask students to write their name at the top of the handout and then write a fictional paragraph describing the situation of someone who’s struggling with a question about his or her own value. Their paragraph should answer the following questions:

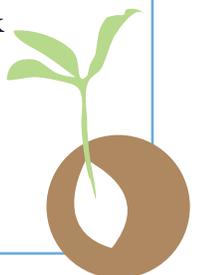
- What is the person’s name and age?
- What is causing this person to wonder if he or she has any value?
- How does this uncertainty make the person feel?
- How does it affect the choices this person makes every day?



Changing

After about 10 minutes, collect the papers from the students. Choose one and read it aloud to the class. Ask how they might respond if this person shared his or her thoughts with them. If necessary, remind the students of what you’ve been talking about regarding the basis of our value. Work together on a response.

Now redistribute the papers to the class making sure that students don’t get their own. Ask them to read the paragraph in front of them and respond in writing to the thoughts that are expressed in it. They should also sign their name at the bottom. Ask several students to share the original paragraph and their written response with the rest of the class.



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1. Our value as determined by society

Spend five minutes looking through magazines while asking yourself these two questions:

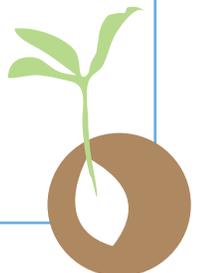
- Who are the people most admired?
- What about these people draws admiration?

Most of these reasons for admiration fall into one of two categories: _____ and _____. We have a tendency to _____ the value of a person based on what they do and how they appear. We clearly see how true this is based on the people we admire in our culture.

Let’s think about this for a moment. Is this how it should be? Should I measure my own value based on what I look like and what I can or cannot do? Is the value of other people in my world _____ by what they look like or what they can or cannot do?

- If I feel good about myself based on how attractive I am or how I perform at school, in athletics, or with some other talent, then how is that perception going to affect my life?
- If I evaluate others based on how attractive they are or how impressive their talents or abilities are, then how will that perspective affect the way I relate to other people?

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Let's see if we can get a glimpse of the way God sees and values us. Ephesians 1:4, 11–12 (MSG) gives us insight into God's intentions as He created us—

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Discuss:

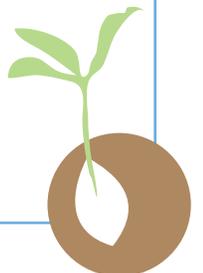
- **According to this passage, when did God decide that He loves us?**
- **What were His hopes for our lives as He created us?**

In the last lesson, we talked about the flow of God's love in and among the three Persons of the Trinity and the creation of human beings as an _____ of that love. We see this truth again in the Ephesians passage. God created us in His own image with the intention of _____ Himself and His love through us. Therefore, as people created in God's image, each of us—as persons _____ through our bodies—makes _____ something beautiful about the _____ God.

Discuss:

- **Based on all that we've talked about today, what makes you a person of value?**

You are a person of value because:



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Let's look at a story that illustrates how easy it is for us to be mistaken about true value.

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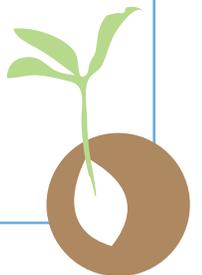
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Answering Questions about Value handout.



Dead Sea Scrolls

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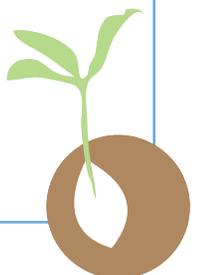
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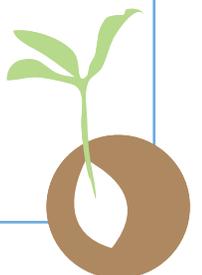
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Answering Questions about Value

Write a paragraph describing the situation of someone who's struggling with a question about his or her own value. Be sure your paragraph answers the following questions:

- What is the person's name and age?
- What is causing this person to wonder if he or she has any value?
- How does this uncertainty make the person feel?
- How does it affect the choices this person makes every day?

Student Response

Signed _____

