



# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

## Sunday 25.06.2023

---

“Out of the Shadows”

### **Preacher**

Ps. Nathan Bean

### **Scripture**

“16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. 18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. 19 They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.”

Colossians 2:16-19

### **Thought**

The Apostle Paul talks of everything in the old testament as being a shadow. The rules and regulations, the rituals, but also things that the people of that age saw as important and vital to their spiritual life. Many of these things were hot topics of the day, intertwined with spirituality and argued about. Paul cuts across this way of thinking with the radical statement that all except Christ is but a shadow. A mere outline, a flat and sometimes distorted shape of the real thing.



Fast forward to our current age, and the question that Paul asks the ancient Church is just as relevant to us in the modern era. This is the question we must always ask: is the main thing Jesus or something else? Does that thing that we focus on make Jesus clearer or not? Every new teaching, every new book, every new YouTube clip - is it making Jesus bigger in our life? Or is it just clouding our minds with noise?

The challenge is this: Unless it's making Jesus more clear, unless it brings into sharper focus His nature, unless it crystallises the fruits of the spirit in our lives - then we should be very wary of it. It may sound like the truth, but is it still a shadow? It might seem to be right, but is it still a shadow? If we allow ourselves to be consumed by all these things (these mere shadows), we begin to focus on that which is peripheral to Christ Himself. We would do well to keep Christ at the centre.

When Jesus met the disciples on the road to Emmaus, He showed them that all scripture pointed to Him. As He did this, they felt their hearts burning within them. When Jesus sat with his disciples at Passover, He didn't dwell on the past or recount the escape from Egypt, He pointed to Himself. "This is my blood", "This is my body" - everything is a shadow pointing to Him.

Likewise, everything we *do* is a shadow. The purpose, however, should be to point to Jesus. We worship not because of the song, but we sing to point our hearts to Jesus. We listen to preaching, not to accumulate knowledge, but to understand more of His heart. All of these things in and of themselves are merely shadows. They provide somewhat of an outline, but they are not the thing itself. We must always lift our eyes to Jesus.

So this week, may we have the boldness to invite the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and minds, to reveal the things in our lives which are mere shadows, and to grant us the wisdom to change our focus and set our eyes upon the one who really matters, the one who makes all that surrounds become shadows in the light of Him.



## **Discussion Points**

1. How do we know the difference between focusing on a shadow and focusing on Jesus himself?
2. What are the shadows in our lives? Can shadows be good and right things?
3. What can I do, this week, to lift my gaze above the shadows and put my eyes and focus back on Jesus?

## **Personal application + Prayer**

Lord Jesus,

In the words of the ancient Psalmist, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

May you reveal the things in my life which are mere shadows of You. Grant me the boldness to lay aside the things that consume my mind, but do not bring You into clearer focus. Show me who You really are, Lord, and may my heart always and only burn for You.

Amen