

Shadows

Week 2 — The Shadow of Darkness

October 30th, 2019

Big Series Idea: You are not alone in the dark moments.

Big Idea of Week 2: No matter what you are dealing with, going through, or getting out of — God is with you and he wants to help you through others around you.

Intended Outcome: Students to identify what they struggle with and what they can do to help move forward from it.

Opening

Welcome everyone to our middle school gathering at The Crossing! We are so glad that you are here, and decided to spend some time tonight with us! Well, if you've been around at all, you know last week we had Night of Worship, which was tons of fun. But the week before that we started this series that we are in called *Shadows*.

And let me just reiterate somethings about this series. We are tackling to heavy and hard topics during this series that are very much common in your lives and world... And I know this might be hard, and it might draw up weird feelings or even unwanted feelings, but what you need to know is this: **WE ARE HERE FOR YOU**. We are doing this because we care about you and love you, and want to see you be your best self with God right there by your side.

So if weird ideas come up, thoughts you've never had, questions that you didn't even know you were curious about, topics you don't understand — whatever it is — ask us. During small groups, after groups, text us tomorrow, talk to your parents, reach out on Instagram — do whatever you gotta do. Cause we, myself and these leaders, we are here to help you and be here for you! Got it?

As we jump in, let's invite God into this conversation, because honestly, it's just plain stupid to try to talk about the stuff we are talking about today without him in that conversation.

PRAY

INTRODUCTION [\(ME\)](#)

Have you guys ever gone camping? You know, hot dogs and marshmallows over an open fire — no cell service — reading books using a flashlight in a sleeping bag. Some of you have been around long enough to here the story where I almost died because a bear almost walked into my and my friends tents... I am sure you will hear it again one day.

But I have gone camping honestly my whole life. My family doesn't do like traditional camping though. Actually, four year ago was the first, and last, time that I ever slept in a tent. At my buddy's bachelor party, when I was almost killed by a bear. But when it came to camping with my family, we NEVER did tent camping. My parents like to call it glamping... Like "glamorous camping" — let me show you what I mean... Like this is the trailer my parents own now and are traveling around the US in, actually they will be here Friday!

*****Outside Trailer Pic*****

But this is very comparable to what I grew up camping in. Very nice. Very nice. Let me show you the insides though. Like before you see this, this trailer is nicer than Kaylee and I's first apartment. No joke.

*****Inside Trailer Pics*****

Camping was NICE growing up. Never slept outside. Never cold. Never dealt with the rain. But I will say, one of my FAVORITE sounds in the world is hearing rain hitting a trailer roof at night. It's soothing and honestly, just super nostalgic to me. I love it.

I could sit here and tell you tons and tons of stories from camping when I was young. Good ones. Bad one. Annoying ones. Funny ones. I have so many memories from camping.

But one of the things I used to love about camping was that we always did it as a family. I always knew that I would be spending the week or weekend hanging out with my mom, dad, and brother. They were always right there by my side.

In the trailer or RV.

Not the tent.

Never a tent.

Tents suck.

Transition ([WE](#))

Unless it's the tent that housed God. (Great transition, huh?) But for real, I bet you didn't know that at one point, God lived in a tent. He did. It's in the Bible, it's in the Old Testament (the first half, the half that is harder to read and focus on.)

MAIN BODY [\(ME/GOD\)](#)

And what's crazy is, after we fell and began sinning, separated from God — the first time he came and lived with us was a tent. Like why a tent? God could have lived in ANYTHING HE WANTED. He could have lived in a mansion that rivals the most expensive mansions in the world — but he chose a tent. And he chose a tent for a reason.

See here's the thing about tents. Tents can go with you wherever you want. Like a trailer, RV, car, and house — they are all great, but not super portable. Like tents usually fit in a tiny little bag packed up and small, but then you open them and they turn into this small area for living. It's great.

That's why God chose a tent. Now, maybe you are still confused. That's okay, let me make it simple for you.

God chose a tent, because a tent can move around easily.

God chose a tent, because a tent could always be with his people.

God chose a tent, because HE wanted to always be with his people.

God chose a tent, because He wanted to be with us.

Here's the bottom line today: **No matter what you are dealing with, what you are going through, what you have been through — God is with you and wants to help you.**

But first, before we see how God wants to help you, you have to know something about God. I wanna walk you through some history with God.

When we were first created, God and man lived together. In the Garden of Eden, after God created man — he actually resided in the Garden with them. Check this out...

Genesis 3:8 (ESV)

“And they [Adam and Eve, the first two humans created] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of day...”

God lived with man, but a few short verses and moments later, God couldn't do that anymore because we, humans, sinned and disobeyed him. So he had to separate himself. But even when God, all powerful-miracle worker-nothing is impossible for him-God, he couldn't stand to be away from us.

So, he created a place to reside with man. He had many build a tent. Inside this tent was where God lived on earth. Now, it was special because no one could go into this tent, except for the highest priest, the highest pastor. And he could only go in once a year. But God lived with us. He lived inside a tent.

Exodus 40:34-35 (NIV)

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the [tent]. Moses could not enter the [tent] because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the [tent].”

Now, remember why God chose a tent. See the people in Israel at the time were ALWAYS moving around. They would travel all over, so if God wanted to move with them, his house had to be portable — a.k.a. TENT.

But as time went on, as God's plans to save us from sin and bring us back to him kept failing because we as humans suck — there was no issue with God's plans — there was issues (and still are) issues with us.

God decided, “Okay, this tent thing isn't cutting it. I have to live with them more.” So he decided to come live with us, in a human body — Jesus. His son. God himself. Fully man. Fully God. I know it doesn't make sense to us. But Jesus was 100% man and 100% God.

John 1:14 (NIV)

“The Word [God] became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus spent 33 years here on earth. Then he was accused of something he didn't do. He was killed. (Paying the price we owe for our sins.) He was buried. Came back to life. (Crazy, I know.) And then he went up to heaven...

Acts 1:9-11 (NIV)

“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in

white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’”

So this happened like 2000 years ago. Jesus, God, went back up to Heaven. So God lived in the tent? He was with us. God lived in Jesus? Jesus was God with us. So what now?

I am so glad that you asked! That’s a great question, thank you _____, for asking that.

Acts 2:38b-39 (NIV)

“And you will receive the gift of the **Holy Spirit**. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all who the Lord our God will call.”

When we choose to follow Jesus, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is God. (Look I know, I am confusing you — here it is simply — God is three persons in one. You know how water can be liquid, solid, and gas? It’s KIND OF like that. God is The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.)

And the Holy Spirit is how God is with us NOW. In this moment. Right now. The Holy Spirit is part of me — I, Robert, am the tent for God because he lives in me. He works his love through me.

Transition [\(YOU\)](#)

So this begs the question, what does this have to do with Shadows.

Well, what about those moments it feels like the tent isn’t near? When we think God is over here, and we are with him— it’s great, its good.

But then a moment of darkness hits, and now we don’t feel God with us... What about those moments...?

We wander off, and all of a sudden God isn’t there.

In the storm.

In the darkness.

When we can’t find our way.

Where is the tent? Where is God?

Let me tell you this... You may be standing way over here and feel like God isn't near or care... And you may not be saying anything and sitting in your darkness...

You may be suffering in silence...

but God isn't silent in your suffering.

CONCLUSION [\(YOU/WE\)](#)

Now you might be in one of those moments right now. You may be suffering right now from three things I want to really focus on tonight.

Anxiety. This looming thing that covers us and makes us feel like 'NOTHING IS GOING TO BE OKAY!' When we can't shake the feeling that the world is falling apart and we can't do anything about it. This worry. Nervousness. Fear. Unease. That heart beating, sweat dropping feeling of "I have no control... Crap..."

Maybe for you, it's **Depression.** That darkness that you can't shake. You are never happy. You have bad thoughts race through you mind day after day after day. You feel alone. Isolated. No one cares about you. No one likes you. You'll never be good enough, so why try? The feelings so severe loneliness. It's when you sit at home, alone, and think 'All these other people have each other, but I have no one...'

Maybe both of those are some thing you struggle with, and it's leads you to the third shadow: **Suicidal Thoughts.** The thoughts that "I shouldn't be here anymore." "Everyone would be fine without me." "I don't want to live another day. It's not worth it." And you begin to think, I could take my own life. I could die tonight. I could not wake up tomorrow. And that shadow begins to loom over you. You can't think about anything else. All you can think about it, "I shouldn't even be alive right now."

Those are three HUGE SHADOWS that you face in your world. In your context. They are topics that come up everyday, and too many adults just want to sweep them under the rug and ignore them.

We won't.

We will talk about them.

We will help you understand them.

We will help you move out from those shadows into God's glorious light and love.

But here's the deal. I want to change our thinking around these moments. We all have them. Maybe for some they are big moments, and others small. Fact is, we have all been through this at some point in some way.

But here's the thing. I'm just gonna say it.

It's a marathon not a sprint.

We aren't running a tiny little race. We are in this for life. I could get out in the parking lot and probably out run most of you from one end to the other (it's just the truth, longer legs more mature body.) But if you and me ran a mile, you would beat me every time (younger, more endurance). There are two types of races: sprints and marathons.

Life is a marathon, not a sprint.

So we need to realize that in those moments, those shadows, of darkness — that is only one moment. That is not your whole lifetime. The goal of this series is to get you to a better place. Taking small steps towards a more peaceful and functional spot.

To get to that spot, we have to take it one step at a time.

My favorite pastor, Judah Smith, he preached one time on this and he said this, **"God is worried about the 100 years, not the 1-second moment that we worry about."**

See, these suicidal thoughts, this anxiety, these depression moments — they don't last forever. They are but a moment, in the large 100 years that we have on earth (give or take a few). I was talking to a friend, Christina, who has severe anxiety, and one of the things that she does to help is she tells herself, "Okay, get through the next five minutes. You'll be okay." And then when that five minutes is up, it's usually gotten better. But if she sat back, and thought about the next hour or day, she wouldn't get over that anxiety attack.

Moments pass.

It's okay to feel the moment, but don't live in it. What you are feeling, whether it is anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts, it's normal for humans. It's okay, but don't live in it. Don't let it take control of your whole mind. Get to a better place. Help yourself. Give yourself grace, it's okay to not be okay; but let's try to work and be better.

Every week, I wanna end with a spiritual step, and a practical step. So let's get to it.

Spiritual Step.

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

"Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you."

Spiritual step is simple: turn to God in the dark moments.

One of the best things you can do to shift your mind is meditate on what God says and who God is. Read scripture. Spend daily time with him. Pray and talk with him.

Can I be honest with you for a second? I suck at prayer. I really do. Like when I try to sit down and go deep in prayer, honestly? I fall asleep. But I am learning that throughout my day, treating God's relationship with me like an ACTUAL RELATIONSHIP helps me. I don't try to pray for hours. But I do pray constantly throughout my day. Minutes. Seconds. Quick comments. "God, I'm worried about this. Can you help me out?" "God, I just found out so and so are having a hard time. Can you intervene and show them your presence?" "God, help me with my patience right now in this moment."

When you struggle —

Turn.

To.

Him.

He wants to help you and is here to help you. But more than that, God actually would love to see you take a practical step.

Practical Step

Here's the thing. Let me give you just a few quick things before I hit the big thing. How can you help yourself in those moments of darkness?

Writing. Keep a journal. When you worry about something or have bad thoughts, write it down. Write down how you feel. Take it from your head to that page of paper.

Shorten your timeline. Like I said, Christina mentioned her thought process helped most. Just think, *how can I get through the next five minutes? Good. Now what about the next five minutes? How can I make it just through class? All I have to do is get through practice. Dinner. One night. The morning. The bus ride.* Whatever it is, break it down into small chunks.

Exercise. No joke. I read an article stating that people who exercise are less depressed and anxious. When you exercise your body releases what are called endorphins (science I know) — but endorphins are what help keep your mood and happiness up. Exercise actually will change your mood.

Finally, the biggest one: **TALK ABOUT IT.**

Find your circle of people and talk. Whether that is your friends in your small group, a teacher, a leader, me, your parents, a professional. You need to talk. Studies also show that “bridging the gap” — talking to someone — helps SIGNIFICANTLY because it is no longer just you fighting in this darkness alone. We want you to open up. Don't be afraid to get help, you can't live this life alone. You need people by your side. Even if that person is a counselor. Don't be ashamed to get help. Kaylee and I both want to go start therapy and counseling. Is it because we are all jacked up and messy people? Oh absolutely. But is there something “wrong” with us? No, we just want to stay healthy emotionally. Counseling helps. Talking helps.

I want to take you back to this idea of the tent. God has always been with us. He's here now. Jesus said this as some of his last words to mankind...

Matthew 28:20 (ESV)

“And behold, I am with you *always*, to the end of the age.”

Jesus is always with you. In the good. In the bad. In the ugly. When the rain pours. When the sun shines. In the darkness. In moments of anxiety. In moments of depression. In moments of suicidal thoughts. In the shadows.

Jesus is there. Always.

Don't take it from me. Take it from Morgan.

****Morgan's Video****