

Shadows

Week 1— The Shadow of Self

October 16th, 2019

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

Big Idea of Week 1: Your shadow begins being shaped by your experiences and circumstances.

Intended Outcome: For them to identify the different moments and people in their life that are shaping how they act and react throughout their days, and ultimately their life.

INTRODUCTION [\(ME\)](#)

Welcome to Middle School at The Crossing, guys! We are so glad that you are here with us tonight as we start this brand new series called *Shadows*. Now, I know you already saw our little warning video. But I want to reiterate a couple things.

This new series we are jumping into might be a heavy one for you. It might be a heavy one for your group. And that's okay. We want to tackle some difficult topics and ideas because they are important. They shouldn't be swept under the rug or just pushed aside. They need to be addressed in a space that is safe.

So I want you to know, we are talking about these things because we believe that God can speak into them. We believe this building. This campus. It's a safe space for you to be honest and open about something you might be struggling with.

We are here for you. We love you. That is why we do these series and tackle some difficult things that, honestly, Jeff and I would gladly not talk about because they are HARD to talk about. But here we are, because this is important.

So I ask that as we jump into this series, do just that. Jump in. Give it your attention. Give it your undivided focus for 2 hours on a Wednesday night. Come, hang out, invite friends, have fun. But when we get in here and start to dive into this stuff, really focus in. Put your phones away. Stop the side conversations. Really pour in, because you can truly walk away from here better if you do.

As we dive into this first week of *Shadows*, let's start this conversation with prayer.

Can we do that?

PRAY

Shadows.

Disney made millions off of a story that started off with a shadow leaving its owner. Peter Pan. In real life, shadows are all around us. And it's because of us that they are there. It's when a light is cast on us that our shadow becomes apparent. But there is more to shadows because shadows automatically assume darkness... There are phrases like "Hiding in the shadows" where something that is dark and unnatural is hidden by darkness around it.

If you know me, you know I am a huge comic fan. And I was reading a new comic I picked up a few weeks ago, and I came across this panel. Now before I show you, how many of you know the character **Harley Quinn?** — she is this "clown style" character and romantic interest of Batman's greatest villain, the Joker. And this is the typically look of Harley Quinn.

*****First Harley Image*****

But the thing is, Harley Quinn wasn't always Harley Quinn. She was once Harleen Quinzel, psychologist.

*****Harleen Quinzel Image*****

But as life went on, all the things that happened **to** her, all the things that happened **around** her — they began to shape her. And there is this image, this panel, from a recent comic called *Harleen*. This one right here.

*****Harley Quinn Shadows Image*****

I love this. You notice her shadow is completely different from who she is. On the outside, in the physical, she's a beautiful, put together, professional psychologist... But the shadow that is cast behind her is this psychotic, chaos obsessed, crazy, anti-villain prone to wreaking havoc for no reason — and that's the Harley that we know.

See sometimes, the shadows that follow us — the shadows that surround us — they don't portray who we are. They don't tell the truths about me and you. But yet, there they are... They are always there. We can't shake them. We can't avoid them. Unlike Peter Pan, we can't detach ourselves from them... They are our shadows and they are there to stay.

Transition ([WE](#))

The thing with our shadows is that sometimes, we can't even see the shadow right away. And when we do, it scares us. It scares us because it is not at all what we think that we are. But the thing with the shadows that loom over us...

If we don't address the shadow, the shadow becomes a darkness.

But when we address these "Shadows of Self" (as we are calling them) — there is an unhealthy way of dealing with them and also a healthy way. We can ignore them and we can also face them head on.

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

Let me say this though before we talk about ignoring or embracing your shadow...

God loves EVERY SINGLE part of you, even your shadow.

Your shadow will always be with you, and that is totally okay. It's how you deal with it that matters. See your shadow needs to fall BEHIND your Imago Dei, your image of God. That should always come first. You can't let your shadow overtake your Imago Dei. That is why we are talking about these topics, so that you can always keep God's view of you in front of the shadows that come in life.

So check out this definition of what a shadow of self is...

Your shadow is the accumulation of untamed emotions, less-than-pure motives and thoughts that, while largely unconscious, strongly influence and shape your behaviors.

Simple terms – **it is a damaged and mostly hidden version of who you are.**

It may reveal itself because of a need to be liked by people, a need to be noticed, or even a tendency toward isolation. It reveals itself in sinful behaviors, such as judgmental perfectionism, outburst of anger, jealousy, resentment, lust, greed, or bitterness. They tend to appear in the ways we try to protect ourselves from feeling vulnerable or exposed.

You can liken it a **Jekyll and Hyde** deal.

*****Image of Jekyll and Hyde*****

During the day, Jekyll leads a polished, well respected life but at night he roams the streets as the violent Mr. Hyde. He initially enjoys going back and forth but pretty soon he loses control. At the most in opportune times he becomes Mr. Hyde and it bothers him so much he takes his own life.

“The Shadow of Self” is something you can’t truly even control — just like Jekyll and Hyde — uncontrollable.

But here’s another truth...

Your “Shadow of Self” is shaped by other people and situations that happen to you and are out of your control. So no matter what you do, that shadow will always be there. So how do you deal with it?

Paul, very famous writer and Christian said this...

Romans 7:15-20 (MSG)

“I know that all God’s commands are spiritual, but I’m not. Isn’t this also your experience? Yes. I’m full of myself — after all, I’ve spent a long time in sin’s prison. What I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary.

But I need something more! ... I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decided not to do bad, and then I do it anyway. ... Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.”

What Paul was struggling with was his shadow. Paul had a past of actions he had done, actions that were done to him, things that happened completely out of his control — his shadow built and built and built — till FINALLY, Paul says, “I keep messing up, even when I wanna do what is right. But I can’t. It’s out of my hands.”

“I do things that I don’t want to do.”

That small statement is powerful. How many times do we do something then realize, *crap. I shouldn’t have done that.* And we look at those situations and don’t even understand why we did it. We can’t even see why we would do something like that.

It's because of our shadow. Knowing the why we choose what we do, even when we don't want to — all comes down to our "Shadow of Self"

Transition ([YOU](#))

The Shadow of Self looms over every single one of us. It shapes how we act. It shapes how we react. It shapes how we talk and how we treat others.

So how are you going to face it?

Are you going to face it head on and stand tall against it?

Or are you going to avoid it? Just ignore it and hope it goes away (when we truly know that it won't...)

CONCLUSION ([YOU/WE](#))

*****UNDERSCORE*****

Your Shadow of Self, I've said it already but I want to dive into it a little more, it is shaped by things that you can't control. It really is. It's the things that happened to you. It's the situations happening around you. It's all out of your control.

It's things like the way you are treated by your teachers and your coaches.

It's things like divorce. Your parents splitting up. You have no control over, but it effects you.

It's things like being bullied at school. It's out of your hands.

It's things as deep and dark as being assaulted. Being sexually assaulted by family or friends. I know that is a topic we don't wanna bring up, but its real. It happens. There are students your age dealing with that.

You have NO CONTROL, NO POWER, NO SAY over these things.

They

Just

Happen.

And they change who you are. They shape who you are.

So you have to do two things.

First:

Explore your past — you have to find your shadow of self...

What are the situations that you are in that you don't have any control over? Who are the people that are around you that are shaping you by their decisions? Where is your shadow of self from?

I can give you an example from my life. It's not a bad one though. Well, sometimes it can be. So I was raised with big expectations on me. Many people compliment my work ethic — the way I don't give up, I finish what I start. But that is because my dad and mom drilled that into me. They never let me leave something unfinished. That wasn't something I could just ignore. But then I look back farther, and I listen to how my dad was raised by his mom and dad, and they had the same expectation and teachings. And now, my dad — me — my brother (sometimes) — have this work ethic that has shaped how we work and how we accomplish things that was shaped by something we ourselves couldn't control. It was what we were taught and expected to do.

The things that happen to us and around us shape our shadow of self. And we have no control over it.

So what are the things that have shaped you? Maybe these things are topics you DON'T ever want to talk about or hard things. But you have to understand, even the bad things we go through, the pain, they shape us. And when those shadows come over us, we have to learn to **embrace** them and **learn** from them, otherwise they go from just being a shadow to complete and total darkness.

We wanted to start this series with the idea of your “Shadow of Self” because the next three weeks we continue in this series, it all stems from your “Shadow of Self.” When talking about things like...

Depression.

Anxiety.

Suicide.

Death.

Isolation.

The reason we struggle with those things, no matter what it is for you, it comes from your Shadow of Self. It's usually coming from your past or linked to something in your past. It's coming from what others have done or said to you. It's coming from the way you were raised. It all comes back to this. That's why we have to start with this.

After you've explored your past, you can then do the second thing:

seek help for your shadow of self. Whatever it is. You can invite someone else in to help.

For each week in this series, I wanna leave you with two steps. A spiritual step, which if you are following God or call yourself a Christ-Follower, this is a step for you. But then I also wanna leave you with a practical step. Something you can do in this moment, here and now, whether you believe in God or not..

So here's the two steps this week. Let's start with the **spiritual step**.

For those of you who call yourself Christ Followers — there is GREAT NEWS. Check out how Paul ends that section from earlier. Remember he says, "I keep doing all these things I KNOW are wrong, but I do them anyways."

But then says this.

Romans 7:25-8:2 (NIV)

"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

Jesus has RESCUED us from that Shadow of Self. We have a savior who loves us and fights for us. He wants to help us stand up to that Shadow of Self and say, *I know you have power over me. I know you have shaped me. But I will not be overcome by the darkness. I will not be hurt by you any longer. I know you are there. You can't hide in the shadows ANYMORE.*

That is good news. And we have to lean into that good news! We have to let Jesus into that shadow for him to pull us out of it. We have to go to him in prayer asking for help, we have to openly declare what our shadow is. He will listen and he will help. All we have to do is open up. So as Christ Followers, I ask you to take the step of letting Jesus into the dark areas. Actively ask him to come into the shadows and help move you back into the light.

So now for the **practical step**.

This one is a little more work, but if you do it, you will begin seeing what your shadow is and you can decide how to respond to it. The practical step is to **figure out your shadow**.

Now this might take some work and that's okay. But you have to sit down, maybe with some paper and a pen, and write out some things that have happened in your life or to you that you had no control over.

Maybe it's the family you were born into.

Maybe it's the way you are treated by someone.

Maybe, and I hate this, but it is something that was done to you, that you didn't choose to have done.

Then you take that list and you say, *How is this influencing me? How is this shown in the way I interact with other people or how I talk to other people?*

You will actually get a chance to do that some in your small groups.

But you really have **2 choices**. **Ignore** and hit a wall because the pain is so deep, leading you down a path that could be self-destructive, or **be courageously proactive** looking at the factors that contributed to its formation.

But I want to close by saying this.

No matter what your Shadow of Self is. No matter if you are still in the shadow or out of the shadows. God loves you. God is there for you. And myself and these leaders of your groups have been given the amazing honor by God to also love you and be here for you. Do we have all the answers? No. Can we help you find the answers? If you give us the chance, we will do our best.

Would you pray with me?

Let's pray