

Shadows Week 4 // Isolation

November 13th

(INTRO)

Welcome everyone to our final week of “Shadows”!

If you are new, we are glad you are with us!

We hope this series has made an impact in your life over the last month or so. Today – we are going to wrap it up with a panel featuring some of your peers. The focus of today is all about the idea of doing life together.

In fact, over the last several weeks we have tried to drill in the notion that you can't deal with some of these heavy issues alone. More importantly, without people in your corner, people to talk to, and understanding that we have a God who cares about our WHOLE self, it becomes challenging to face the trials we will experience. I will explain more in a moment, but first, will you join me in a moment of prayer.

(Pray)

(ME)

I recently listened to a pastor named Judah Smith who did a series with his church called “I’m Anxious”. During one of his messages, he broke down a passage we find in scripture about how to deal with anxiety. It made a lasting impact on me and I knew it was something worth sharing.

When we look at the early church, Christians were going through difficult times. And when I say difficult, I truly mean it.

Just as we are commanded to do today, the first Christians were teaching about Jesus, what he had done, and the value of having a relationship with him. Only difference, yet a big difference was they were being killed for doing so.

This wasn't suburban America in which we have the freedom to do as we please when it comes to our faith. This was a culture that sought to kill anyone who spoke of Jesus.

So, during this time, one of Jesus' closest friends Peter, wrote a letter of encouragement to these early Christians understanding full well how much fear and anxiety they were dealing with. And in this letter, he just wasn't talking to one person,

rather he was talking to a group of people, a community of people, who were in a difficult time. And this community aspect is important as we will see.

As you page through his letter, in the final part, he writes these words. He says...

(GOD)

6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. 7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers[b] all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are.

1 Peter 5:6-9

Now – a lot of people see these verses and can be somewhat annoyed.

Why?

Because he makes it sound so easy.

“Just pray you will be fine”.

“Just tell God and you will be good”.

That can be annoying right, as if we want to feel this way...

This passage read alone can translate for some people as “all I have to do is pray about my fears, pray about my worries, and pray about my anxieties and it will all work out”.

Honestly though – c'mon – it just isn't that easy!

But what we miss is that Peter brilliantly saves this encouragement for end. Yet if you read the few chapters before it, the context of it and why he says it makes sense.

In chapter one he says:

Love one another as if your lives depend on it...

1 Peter 1:22 (MSG)

In other words, I know you are scared and I fully grasp what you are going through because I am going through it too. But if you want to get through this, you have to love each other in the midst of this season. You have to love one another so deeply because your lives depend on it – because it does!

You can sense the urgency in his language because the clock was ticking and trying to manage the anxiety and fear they felt on their own wouldn't do a thing. Peter knew they needed to love one another through it!

Translation – **YOU NEED each other to get through this because it is the ONLY way you will get through it.**

He goes on and in chapter two he states,

And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple...
1 Peter 2:5

Translation – **You are each like a stone that is a part of this temple and God is building you up piece by piece.**

Let me explain why this was important and what Peter was getting at...

*(Illustration –
use Jenga blocks and start to build it up...
Build as much as you can and remove pieces accordingly)*

When a construction worker is laying a foundation of a building, he builds it piece by piece but those pieces connect. You don't build it separate or alone but each piece builds off the other. And when you get to the final product, you have a building that is nearly immovable and strong.

Now – you can take a piece out and the building may continue to stand, but if you take too many out, the building and infrastructure cannot withstand and eventually some parts, if not all of it falls.

Point being – We are to live our lives in such a way that we love so deeply and care for one another in such a way that because we are together, like bricks on a building, when the storms come, our connection to one another allows us to stand tall and withstand anything that comes our way.

So, as we keep reading and get to chapter 5 and hear Peter's thoughts about casting our anxieties unto God because he cares, it wasn't designed to feel like a "just do it" verse. It wasn't designed to sound simple.

However, Peter is telling us that we can cast our fears and anxieties to a God who cares because he has surrounded us with people in our lives that we ought to be connected to in order to keep moving forward.

But notice what he doesn't say...

He never says cast your fears and God will fix you. He says cast your fears to God because he cares.

Which is better though? Someone who fixes and we learn nothing, or someone who cares, meaning they are with us, they are beside us, they are in this battle with us.

(YOU)

And God cares for each of us so deeply that he has designed you even when you least want it, to have people around you that he will use ensure you come out stronger on the other side.

This is why isolation and living life alone is dangerous. You simply can't do it because your creator has designed with an innate need to be around others that he will use through the good, bad, and ugly.

This is why we value groups here on Wednesday nights because they matter. They aren't perfect by any means, but overtime you see the value of being connected to people who you love you as if their lives depend on it. God cares that much about you!

To conclude our time, we wanted to get some thoughts from a group of your peers that are different in their own right, yet connected because of their understanding of doing life with others.

PANEL SCRIPT

WELCOME and Introduce Entire Panel

(Maybe say a funny thing or two about each person as you introduce them?)

Thanks for joining us!

Let me start with _____ but you will each get a chance to answer this question.

PANEL QUESTIONS

(All Guest)

We have discussed a number of topics over the last month. We learned we all have certain shadows or things we may bury that could indirectly or directly affect our lives. We discussed anxiety, depression, and suicide. We even talked about coping with death and what happens when you die. ***What topic of discussion affected you the most and why?***

Host: *Maybe share a quick thought here and then segue to next question.*

Host: (Guest 1 and Guest 3)

What is something you have learned about God during this series?

Host: *Few comments to clarify if needed and segue to next question.*

Host: (Guest 2 and Guest 4)

We have reiterated the notion of talking about some of the hurt, pain, and things we hide out of shame and guilt. Every week we encouraged everyone to seek help through a friend, family member, leader, etc. ***Who do you have in your life that you turn to and why is it important for you to have this person in your life?***

Host: *Maybe share a quick example from your own life here and then segue to next question.*

Host: (Guest 1 and Guest 4)

Today we focused on topic of Isolation and every week try to provide a space where each student NEVER feels alone. Consequently, we focus a lot on GROUPS! ***When you think about your SMALL GROUP, what do you enjoy about your group and how has this group impacted your life...especially during the tougher times?***

Host: *Few comments to clarify if needed and segue to next question.*

Host:(ADULT Guest Only)

As an adult, what are some things you have learned and realized over the years that has helped you to deal with some of the painful moments in your life?

Host: (Guest 2 and Guest 3)

A number of us have friends who need this type of community and life-giving relationships. As you think about some of those names that are “missing”, how could your experiences and learnings in this series point some of these friends towards a path of knowing Jesus.

CLOSING COMMENTS

To the Panel: I just want to so say thanks to each of you for sharing. We know this can be hard and even a stretch but it was helpful to us all.

To the Crowd: Again, we can't say enough about seeking help if you need it. From the bottom of our team and leaders' hearts – we care! Thanks for joining us these last few weeks. We hope it brought you some sense of hope but more importantly, it brought you one step closer to Jesus.

Next Week we begin our new series “My World” (show graphic). To close out our year, we will tackle what it means to connect with God, Friends, and our Family. Make sure you are here.

Let me pray us out, and you can head to your groups!

(Pray)