



Fighting Shadows

By Jefferson Bethke & Jon Tyson • Thomas Nelson 2024

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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The Nutshell

So many men express confusion, shame, and fear daily. We become shadow men, spending our lives like shadows, confused about what's good for a man. But you were not born for the shadows; you were born for the light. As men we are called to be ruthless in our effort to get in—and stay in—the light. Light heals us and transforms us, but we must fight to stay in its radiance. There is a way out of the shadows. Light is on the horizon.

The shadows we're talking about derive their power from an illusion—no matter the fear or the failure that seems to be eclipsing the light, the light is still there. Many men are in a state of massive despair because they have forgotten their future—their inheritance, their calling, their horizon.

Loneliness is the experience of unwanted solitude and disconnection. Loneliness can kill. It can be as strong a predictor for illness and death as smoking, obesity, and high blood pressure. The real cure for loneliness is friendship—deep, enriching, beautiful, long-term friendship. Despite the looming shadow of loneliness and all its negative impacts, there's a simple solution: invest in relationships. You were created for community. You were designed for friendship.

Shame introduces cracks—it separates us from our hearts, from other people, and God. Shame is not guilt. Guilt is the sense that I have done something wrong. Shame is the internalization of “There's something wrong with me. I'm gross, dirty, bad.” Here's a wild truth:

God isn't ashamed of you. He isn't disappointed in you. He delights in your presence.

Lust is one of the dominant shadows falling across the hearts of men today. The way of Jesus is not about repression or indulgence; it's about the redirection and transformation of our desires. We must rediscover that our quest for sex is ultimately not a quest for pleasure; it's a quest for union, a quest for belonging, a disguised search for God.

The opposite of ambition is not humility; it is sloth, passivity, timidity, and complacency. Holy ambition is a gift. It's an advantage for men in our world today. Our vision of holy ambition is rooted deeply in what it means to be a disciple because Jesus was a man seized with holy ambition.

It can be especially tough to believe that the work we do is genuinely meaningful—which is when the shadow

of futility starts to fall over a man's heart. We need men with codes. You need a North Star to define your direction, and a purpose to dedicate yourself to.

Men today lack purpose and drive, direction in life, and initiative in relationships. Without vision, men get stuck. The movement of Jesus is called to be a movement of visionaries. God is a general. He is mighty in battle and skilled in war. You are also a soldier.

So many men today never reach their redemptive potential. They stop fighting the shadows and start accepting them.

But this is not your fate. You are a man of the light. Fear not. Move through shadows with confidence. The story you are in is a story of awakening.

Face the shadows. Fight the shadows. Walk into the light. We will see you there.