

ME AND MY SHADOW

“Dealing with the Dark Side of my Heart”

Part 1

Discipleship Community

August 5, 2015

Ken Baugh

I. UNDERSTANDING MY SHADOW

“I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God!” Romans 7:15-24

Everyone has a _____ .

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” 1 John 1:8-10 (NIV84)

“Your shadow is the accumulation of untamed emotions, less-than-pure motives and thoughts that, while largely unconscious, strongly influence and shape your behaviors. It is the damaged but mostly hidden version of who you are. The shadow may erupt in various forms. Sometimes it reveals itself in sinful behaviors, such as judgmental perfectionism, outbursts of anger, jealousy, resentment, lust, greed, or bitterness. Or it may reveal itself more subtly through a need to rescue others and be liked by people, a need to be noticed, an inability to stop working, a tendency toward isolation, or rigidity. Aspects of the shadow may be sinful, but they may also simply be weaknesses or wounds. They tend to appear in the ways we try to protect ourselves from feeling vulnerable or exposed. This means that the shadow is not simply another word for sin. If that makes you think the shadow is hard to pin down, you’re right.”

*-Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 55-56.*

“The shadow, by nature, is difficult to grasp. It is dangerous, disorderly and forever in hiding, as if the light of consciousness would steal its very life.”

-Meeting The Shadow, Connie Zweig & Jeremiah Abrams, ed. xvii.

II. CASE STUDY

“Larry is the forty-one-year-old founding pastor of a rapidly growing church. He and his wife, Rebecca, have been married for twenty years and have four children. In his eighteen years leading the church, the congregation has grown from a core group of a hundred to more than four thousand, with thirty-five staff members.

Larry is friendly, easygoing, and loved by his team. Things with the church and his life seemed to be going well until the day he abruptly submitted his resignation to the personnel committee. He said he was burnt out from the last few years, especially after completing a recent capital campaign for a new worship center. It turned out, however, that there was much more to the story.

A recent visitor to the church had encountered Larry with another woman at a hotel in a nearby city. And it was not a random encounter, but a three-year, on-again-off-again affair. Larry seemed to think his resignation would somehow prevent the news from being discovered by the church, but it was too late for that.

Later, it was also discovered that Larry had accumulated a sizable financial debt in recent years. Larry resigned. His marriage ended. The church was left to pick up the pieces. It's a sadly familiar story, isn't it? But there is another aspect to this story that raises issues every Christian leader needs to grapple with.

During the three years that Larry's life was going off the rails, the church was thriving. Attendance increased by seven hundred, many people came to faith in Christ, the giving and the ministry budget increased, and the church's impact on the community expanded.

Larry even preached a popular series on biblical marriage and family life for six weeks during that time. Somehow, the church experienced short-term “success” even when something was terribly wrong at the leadership level. But after Larry's resignation, the church swiftly spiraled downward. People felt betrayed and deceived. Fingers were pointed. Resources and energies once devoted to outreach were redirected to helping people within the church grieve and heal. **The budget was slashed by 40 percent.** This meant that ministries both locally and internationally were discontinued or radically cut back. Frustrated church members wanted to know why staff and members of the church board hadn't noticed any early warning signs of Larry's problems. At the end of a quarterly congregational meeting in which this issue was raised, the board chairperson summarized the board's response:

‘We saw things that concerned us. Larry was always on the move, juggling new projects, speaking at conferences, hiring new staff. It was hard for us to keep up with how quickly the church was changing. *None of us probed and asked deeper questions.* The reality is, we were so caught up in the excitement over things like the **new building campaign** and the **attendance numbers skyrocketing** that we disregarded what we did notice. And we attributed his behavior to the normal stresses that come with growth.’ A long pause followed. The room grew painfully quiet. The board chair quietly acknowledged **what** many others were thinking: ‘What makes this whole situation so hard to understand is that some of our most powerful weekend services took place during the three years he was having his affair.’”

You Know It's Your Shadow When You . . .

- Act out inappropriately when under pressure.
- Don't want someone to succeed because they've hurt you.
- Are triggered by a person or circumstance and say things you later regret.
- Disregard your spouse or coworker when they bring up a difficult issue about you and your behavior.
- Keep doing the same thing over and over even though the consequences remain negative.
- Are angry, jealous, and envious — a lot.
- Do and say things out of fear of what other people think.
- Get busier rather than more reflective when you are anxious.
- Tend to idealize others who seem to have been given special gifts by God, forgetting they too have a shadow and are broken like you.
- Make negative comments to others about those who frustrate you rather than go to them directly. -*The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 60.

III. HOW HEALTHY IS MY APPROACH TO MY SHADOW?

Use the list of statements that follow to do a brief assessment on how you relate to your shadow. Next to each statement, write down the number that best describes your response. Use the following scale:

5 = Always true of me 4 = Frequently true of me 3 = Occasionally true of me
2 = Rarely true of me 1 = Never true of me

- _____ 1. I take time regular to experience and process my anger, fear, and sadness with God and others.
- _____ 2. I have a healthy awareness of my shadow—my wounds, self-protectiveness, and weaknesses— and how I am tempted to sin against other people in my unguarded moments.
- _____ 3. When I am triggered — have an overreaction — rather than blaming others, I settle myself down and ask, 'What from my past might be causing me to react so strongly to this situation or person?'
- _____ 4. I am honest with myself and a few significant others about the struggles, doubts, and hurts deep beneath the surface of my life.
- _____ 5. I routinely seek out and embrace feedback from other people about how they experience my flaws as a leader.
- _____ 6. I take the time to ask hard questions of myself even when I am fearful of where the answers might lead.
- _____ 7. I consistently seek out guidance from mentors, a counselor, a spiritual director, or other mature believers to help me process how my shadow

manifests itself in my life.

- _____ 8. I quickly reach out for help when I am overly stressed or engaging in unhealthy or self-destructive behaviors.
- _____ 9. I am able to identify the roots of my personal weaknesses and failures (mixed motives, fear of what others think, anxiety, anger, etc.) in my family of origin or in my personal history.
- _____ 10. I am able to anticipate moments and seasons that might be difficult for me and to ask for support in advance.

Take a moment to briefly review your responses.

What stands out most to you?

Although there is no definitive scoring for the assessment, there are some general observations (see below) that may help you understand more about where you're at. Even if your score isn't what you hoped, give yourself credit for having taken the assessment in the first place. That is actually a significant step forward in growing into a more effective and healthy person. **Spiritual maturity is a marathon, not a sprint — allow yourself to take it one step at a time.** (59-60)

If you scored mostly ones and twos, your relationship with your shadow is just beginning. Most likely, your Christian life has been focused almost exclusively on doing Christ's work in the world with only a limited focus on your interior life. This may have been a scary or difficult assessment for you. If so, don't worry. You can begin slowly with one of the pathways for facing your shadow. God will lead you at a pace that works for you.

If you scored mostly twos and threes, you have likely already begun to face your shadow and now God is inviting you to the next level of awareness and growth. Your challenge will be to take the necessary steps to truly go deep beneath the surface of your interior life . . . Ask God for wise, trusted companions for your journey. You can expect God to teach you how to lead out of your weaknesses, like the apostle Paul did, so Christ's power might rest on you in new and fresh ways.

If you scored mostly fours and fives, you likely have a healthy awareness of your shadow. That is wonderful. You have integrated facing your shadow in your life and now no longer experience the negative consequences of ignoring your shadow. You may even have discovered the shadow's hidden treasures for your Christian life. You can expect new levels of discovery as you continue to engage your shadow. And, by God's grace, you can be an instrument in his hands to gently serve others in discovering and facing their shadows." -*The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 79-80.

