

Everyone has a shadow. Anytime there is light, we cast a shadow. In a sense, our shadow is part of us. It is always attached to us. It is in the same general shape that we are. It moves the way we move.

But in a sense, our shadow is also something distinct. There is a separation between us and our shadow. Depending on where the sun is, our shadow may linger behind us as we walk away, or it may precede us as we approach.

Shadows even impact people. Consider the shadow of a tree on a child's wall at night. If that shadow is caused by lightning, it can be terribly frightening.

Yet the same shadow of the same tree can bring comfort if it is caused by the headlights of the parents' car as they return from an evening out. The same tree with the same shadow can have completely opposite effects. What makes the difference? The source of light.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear that the Apostle Peter had quite a shadow. It says that people would bring the sick to the streets in the hopes that Peter's shadow might fall on them, and they would be healed (Acts 5:15). That's an amazing effect one man's shadow can have.

But like the shadow of the tree in the child's room, it was not so much Peter himself, but the source of light that allowed his shadow to have healing power. You see, Peter's shadow was caused not merely by the sun, nor by his own efforts, but by the light of Jesus Christ. His shadow was not only physical, but spiritual. Peter's faith was so great that the light of Christ worked in his shadow to bring healing to those in need.

We too have a spiritual shadow. It can precede us into a room, and it can remain long after we leave. The question

is, what is the light source of that spiritual shadow?

The director of nursing at a Massachusetts hospital recently lamented a nursing shortage there, and the long hours her nurses had to put in. She said that, through no fault of their own, stress on some of the nurses was affecting the patients' health.

Even when these overworked nurses were technically accurate, some left a "toxic shadow" in the room, according to the director. The spiritual shadow from some of these overworked nurses was not able to come from love or faith, but was being driven by stress and fatigue, and it was actually bringing down the patients. Such is the power of the shadow!

I think we can all relate to those moments in our own lives: when the source of our spiritual shadow is stress or bitterness, we don't leave a very good imprint on the rooms we visit. On the other hand, we all know plenty of people who, like St. Peter, enter a room, and leave such a peaceful and joyous spiritual shadow, that it lingers long after they depart. This can only happen when the source of the shadow is not what is broken within us, but rather the light of Christ shining on and through us.

Consider what kind of spiritual shadow you bring into a room. Is it toxic? Is it full of inner bitterness, pain, or the stress of life? Or is the shadow you bring to a room full of life, joy, and spiritual healing? We all have a spiritual shadow. May the source of that shadow be the light of Jesus Christ, and may our shadows be a blessing to those around us.

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