

JEFFERSON  
BETHKE

JON  
TYSON

FIGHTING  
SHADOWS

---

# MASTERCLASS



*“They can only come to morning through the shadows.”*  
- J.R.R. Tolkien

---

*“You don’t find light by avoiding the darkness.”*  
- S. Kelley Harrell

Welcome to The Fighting Shadows Masterclass!

A low-grade angst seems to have settled over the hearts of men in our world today. This angst is not new. Henry David Thoreau identified it this way in the mid-1840s: *"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation ... unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind."* This unconscious despair is not so much a direct threat as a kind of fog that has rolled in, blocking our vision and leaving us confused about how to function as men in the modern world.

Our vision of being godly men has fallen so far short of our calling. We just don't know how to live from full hearts and hold our heads high as men in the modern world. The writer of Ecclesiastes said, *"For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow."* Spending our lives like shadows, confused about what's good for a man – this has become the fate of so many men. It might even feel like your fate now.

But here's the absolute truth: you were not born for the shadows; you were born for the light. And as men, we are called to be ruthless in our effort to get in – and stay in – the light.

As Matthew 4:16 reminds us, *"The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a Light dawned."*

Light is on the horizon.

We pray as you work your way through this guidebook that every shadow keeping you from walking in the light will be pulled back. May the Spirit of God working within you transform you more into the image and likeness of Jesus so you too can go and be the light of the world to those still fighting shadows.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

SESSION 1: Introduction - The Eclipse 01

SESSION 2: The Shadow of Despair 02

SESSION 3: The Shadow of Loneliness 05

SESSION 4: The Shadow of Shame 08

SESSION 5: The Shadow of Lust 10

SESSION 6: The Shadow of Ambition 13

SESSION 7: The Shadow of Futility 15

SESSION 8: The Shadow of Apathy 18

# SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION THE ECLIPSE

## SESSION RECAP

Satan's strategy may seem simple, but he has perfected it through countless generations of men. He knows that when we can see God with clarity, we can resist temptation and move forward. But if he can block us from the light, the shadows will fall and our faith will flounder. He wants to rob you of life, rub your face in your mistakes, and paralyze you with shame. But take heart, hope is not lost. Throughout this course, we are going to reposition your eyes so you can see past the eclipse and back to the source of light that frees you from failure and shame and lets you hold your head high with confident trust.

## PRAYER

Take a few minutes to pray about the time you are about to spend going through this book and the masterclass. Give God permission to do whatever he wants to bring you out of the shadows and into His light. Thank Him for all that he's about to do and get your expectations up! Feel free to journal any thoughts, prayers, fears, or hopes here.

# SESSION 2: THE SHADOW OF DESPAIR

## SESSION RECAP

How you see the future and what you believe about it will determine whether you will go through life with a sense of hope or with a sense of despair. Despair is not a lack of hope or the opposite of hope. Rather, despair is a misplaced hope. It's hope in the wrong thing. Many Christian men today live in a state of massive despair because they have misplaced hopes about their futures. They have misplaced hopes of a disembodied heaven, of no earthly sufferings, of earthly possessions, and of having things completely under control. But we must let the light of God's Word and truth touch the shadows of our despair and reorient our understanding of the future so we can walk in a genuine, true, Biblical hope that does not disappoint.

## MISPLACED HOPES AUDIT

1. Are there any places in your life where you are putting your hope in a disembodied, distant heaven?

2. Are there places in your life where you are putting your hope in having no earthly sufferings?

3. Are any of your hopes found in earthly possessions? What you already have or hope to acquire one day?

4. Is any of your hope rooted in your ability to have and maintain control?

5. Are there any other areas of your heart and story where the shadow of despair might be lurking? Can you trace a misplaced hope behind it? Ask God for discernment if you aren't sure.

6. Take any despair you might be experiencing to Jesus and renounce it. Ask God and search the Scriptures for His truth and promises over you and/or the situation(s) so you can now be rooted in Biblical hope. Journal what you discover here.

## HOPE LOG

Audit your adult years. Can you mark any moments where your view of (and hope for) the future changed the course of your life, whether for good or bad? Try to come up with 5.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
- 

## FUTURE AUDIT

Create a plan to mark every moment throughout this next week where God's promised future of glory, goodness, and resurrected life enters your thoughts. We want you to see how often or seldom you allow God's good future to make its way into your daily life.

## GETTING YOUR TELOS RIGHT

In this session, Jeff talks about the Greek word “telos.” It’s our “chief aim,” our supreme goal in life. It’s the ultimate end we are shooting toward, and it works its way into our deepest desires and cravings for our future and determines a lot of how we will go about living our lives. One of the most important things for every man to do is get his telos right.

1. What do you want your telos to be?

2. Sit in some of your current, primal desires (what you crave and want for the future). List them out. Are these aligned with what you wrote above? Are they aligned with your walk with Jesus? Are there any incongruencies? Address those in prayer if so.

*“The telos we live toward is not something we primarily know or believe or think about; rather, our telos is what we want, what we long for, what we crave.”*

- James K. A. Smith



# SESSION 3: THE SHADOW OF LONELINESS

## SESSION RECAP

You were created to belong. Created for community. Created for friendships. But as the busyness of life and its responsibilities and distractions continue to creep in at unprecedented rates, men everywhere find themselves experiencing unwanted solitude and disconnection. Emotionally numb and isolated under the shadow of loneliness. Research shows, however, that strong relationships affect the outcome of a man's life more than anything -more than IQ, social class, health, and money. And the best use of your time in terms of how much it will impact your life — emotionally, physically, and spiritually — has been verifiably shown to be *investing in deepening your relationships*. Regularly make room for proximity, unplanned interactions, and vulnerability with a community of brothers, so you can cast off the shadow of loneliness and lean into the joy and fulfillment that comes from deep friendships.

## FRIENDSHIP AUDIT

### 1. PROXIMITY

How often are you just in environments with other men?

In what ways can you increase your chances for proximity?

## 2. UNPLANNED INTERACTIONS

What part of your life feels rigid and scheduled? How can you adjust (mentally and/or practically) your weeks to create more margin for unplanned interactions?

## 3. VULNERABILITY

Jeff described vulnerability as letting others see what's truly in your mind and heart -the dreams, the fears, the hopes, the disappointments, the failures, the wins, your sins, your questions, etc. How would you describe your history with vulnerability? Did you grow up seeing it or the opposite of it modeled? Did you practice it growing up?

What is your current relationship with vulnerability? Do your actions indicate you value it and live it out?

Do you have any rhythms that support a lifestyle of vulnerability (e.g. a monthly guy's night, a weekly Bible study with friends, bonfire nights with a group of brothers, etc.)? If so, how can you strengthen those rhythms? If not, in what way(s) can you establish rhythms to support a lifestyle of vulnerability?

## SCREEN AUDIT

Just like a food log, mark and note how much time a week (after work hours) you are giving to a screen (phone, television, etc.). What do your findings suggest? Are there any changes you want to make?

## ILLUMINATOR vs. DIMINSHER

Jeff mentioned that there are two kinds of people in life: illuminators and diminishers. Illuminators bring out the best in others, while the presence of a diminisher makes others feel small.

1. Which one are you?

2. Who is an illuminator in your life?

3. How can you be an illuminator to someone you know this week?

*"The real cure for loneliness is friendship -deep, enriching, beautiful, long-term friendship."  
-Jefferson Bethke*

# SESSION 4:

## THE SHADOW OF SHAME

### SESSION RECAP

Shame is the internalized sense that there is something fundamentally wrong with you. Shame attacks our identity and whispers lies like, “You are not good enough.” or “You are unworthy.” It causes chaos and separates us from our hearts, from other people, and, worst of all, from God. We hide and isolate in the shadow of shame and it strips us of our ability to create beauty and do good. What keeps most men stuck in shame is the misguided belief that we can get out of shame ourselves. But you can’t think your way out of shame. You can’t fix your shame with religion or good works. You can’t bury your shame with distraction or try to numb it. There’s only one real solution to cast out shame from your life and that is to respond to God’s invitation to heal your shame. For that to happen, we need to drag our shame into God’s presence and let him speak not just *about* us but *to* us. There, he will tell us the truth about who we are and how He sees us.

### SHAME AUDIT

1. Are there any areas in your life where you are scared to be bold or creative?

2. Are there any areas in your life where you spend a lot of time and energy hiding the real you?

3. Shame can almost always be traced back to believing a lie about yourself and then making an agreement with that lie. Take some time to ask God what lies you are believing about yourself. Have you made agreements with those lies? Journal whatever comes to mind.

4. Can you trace the origin of the lie(s) back to a particular event or moment in your life?

5. What does God have to say about this? Renounce the lie you have been believing about yourself and ask God to reveal His truth about you and how he sees you.

Spend some time this week opening up to a friend, mentor, or spouse about what you processed in the questions above. Remnants of shame often disappear when we choose to be vulnerable and allow ourselves to receive empathy from those we trust and love.

*"Shame is both the source and the result of evil's active assault on God's creation."*

- Curt Thomson

*"Seeking outside help for our shame is not easy, but it is necessary for us to flourish as men."*

- Jefferson Bethke

# SESSION 5: THE SHADOW OF LUST

## SESSION RECAP

Lust deforms us as men. It distorts our vision of what sex is, our vision of the role women are called to play in our lives and how we are to serve them, and our imaginations and appetites. And it robs us of our confidence. So few men seem to rise up into who God has called them to be because they feel disqualified by their internal wrestling and struggles with lust. We live in a world that says you have to release your lustful desires. On the contrary, the church has said you have to repress your sexual desires. But the call is not to release our desires whenever we want or repress them and view them as bad. We are called to redirect them as a tool of spiritual formation to make us into men of love. Lust severs the humanity of a person for pleasure. But love cares about the person and is willing to deny oneself and give up pleasure for the other's well-being. We are called to channel our eros toward Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Which means we restrain ourselves out of love. We honor women and show them dignity. And ultimately, we ask God to change our hearts away from predatory, sinful grasping desires to a self-giving, others-centered sacrificial love. We don't just need a change of behavior. We need a change of heart. And only God can reorder our disordered sexual desires and transform us into people of love.

## YOUR HISTORY WITH LUST

1. Where were you when the shadow of lust first fell over your life?
2. Spend some time reflecting on your history fighting lust. How did you address lust throughout different seasons and stages of life? Have you released and indulged in your desires, have you repressed them or have you redirected them? Has your response to lust deformed you in any way? How so?

A large white rectangular box, likely intended for a person to write their reflections on the questions provided in the list above.



## NEEDS AUDIT

Oftentimes, we act on our lustful desires to meet our underlying needs. We feel lonely, afraid, tired, scared, bored, stressed, etc., and we attempt to meet those needs by releasing our sexual desires.

1. Can you pinpoint any patterns surrounding the times you have engaged with lust? What typically surrounds those moments when you give in to the temptation?

2. Based on your response above, how can you meet those needs in a healthy way?

## LUST VS LOVE

1. Jon said that we are not to release our lustful desires whenever we want, and, just the same, we are not to repress them and view them as bad. *We are called to redirect them as a tool of spiritual formation to make us into men of love.* What does this look like practically for you? How can you make a habit out of this? Spend some time in prayer and reflection to answer this.

2. The pornification of nearly everything leads to a deformed view of women. Women have been seen as commodities for male consumption and enjoyment. It's no wonder so many of them feel vulnerable in the presence of a man. But if I am a man being formed into the image of Jesus, I must learn to treat women the way Jesus did, with respect, dignity, and honor. To be like Jesus is to be a man women can trust. Ask a handful of the women in your life for feedback about how they feel in your presence. How can you level up? How can you honor her better?

3. List out 2-3 practical things you can do to treat the women around you more like Jesus. Then, start to do them this week.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*"Lust wants an experience. Love wants a person."*

*- C.S. Lewis*

*"There is no dignity when the human dimension is eliminated from the person. In short, the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much of the person, but that it shows far too little."*

*- Pope John Paul II*

## SESSION 6:

# THE SHADOW OF AMBITION

### SESSION RECAP:

Ambition stirs the heart of every man. It gives us perspective on life. A sense of vision, a drive, and a sense of direction. Ambition can be good or it can be evil. Worldly ambition is dangerous and drives us away from God if it is marked by a desire for domination and recognition. This kind of ambition says it's not enough to just do your best; you have to be better than someone else, and you must have an audience to witness and celebrate your accomplishments. But ambition that has been redeemed by God and is channeled properly is a gift. There are three keys to having Godly ambition. The first is having a kingdom vision. It's the ability to look above the horizon of the self to see what God is doing in the world. The second key is having the crystallization of discontent; that is, experiencing a moment of realization that you no longer will let things be the way they are. And the third key to Godly ambition is to take action and move forward in radical sacrificial action. Holy ambition leads to divine acceleration. When God finds a man who has exchanged the shadow of selfish ambition for Godly ambition, he anoints him, empowers him, and uses him in the world.

### YOUR HISTORY WITH AMBITION

1. What kind of ambition (or lack of) did you see modeled growing up? What lessons did you learn about ambition in your adolescent years (either directly or indirectly)?
2. Examine your relationship with ambition as a man. How would you describe it?

## AMBITION AUDIT

1. Think about the things you gave your time and attention to in the past year or so that were fueled by ambition. The relationships, ideas, work opportunities, financial moves, etc. What did that cost you? Have your actions been motivated by worldly ambition or a Godly ambition? In light of a Kingdom vision, is this a worthy pursuit? Fill out the chart below and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth to you.

What you have given your time and energy to:	What kind of ambition it was fueled by - Worldly or Godly:	What did it cost you or those around you?	In light of a Kingdom vision, was/is this a worthy pursuit?

2. Do you feel there is any trace of worldly ambition in your heart? How might it be manifesting in your soul? Your work? Your relationships?

3. Ask God for the gift of holy ambition. Ask Him to redeem any worldly ambition in your heart for His Kingdom and His purposes. What would it look like if you only had holy ambition? Are there any radical sacrificial actions you want to move toward taking in this season? Be bold and brave; when a man is filled with holy ambition, anything is possible.

4. In opposition to the spirit of domination, call or connect with someone you have felt in competition with. Honor them. Celebrate them. Encourage them. Defy the spirit of competition with love and value.

*"One way to simplify your spirituality is to clarify your ambition."  
- Donald Whitney*

# SESSION 7:

## THE SHADOW OF FUTILITY

### SESSION RECAP

Futility is the struggle for purpose and meaning. It's the quality of being ineffective or useless. It's the lie that says, "I don't have a purpose." But you are uniquely wired and designed to bring your abilities and strengths to the world, to collaborate in a rich, communal way, and to serve those around you. Meaninglessness and futility are found in *how* you do something, not in what you do. So we must learn to recover the sacredness of daily work, regardless of the domain. You are useful, you have a purpose, and you are deeply effective for the kingdom of God when you walk in your giftings and talents, and strengths. Learn to rule your passions, find your calling and assignment, live by a code so that you are always ready for your kairos moment, and make time to play. As you hold all these things in balance, the bright light of purpose, meaning, and joy will send the shadow of futility far away from your heart.

### FUTILITY AUDIT

Describe your relationship with the shadow of futility. Do you find yourself struggling for meaning and purpose?

### LEVELS OF RULING

Jeff mentioned the four levels of ruling: (1) Ruling Yourself, (2) Ruling a Small Team, (3) Ruling a Tribe, and (4) Ruling a City. What season are you in? Have you skipped mastery at a previous level?

## CIRCLES vs DOTS

How have you seen God's will in the past: as a circle or a dot? How would seeing his will as a circle in your current reality help to dismantle any remnants of futility?

## CALLING vs ASSIGNMENT

Your calling is the gifting over your life. It's big picture. Your unique wiring. The way you operate in the world. Oftentimes, the shadow of futility hovers over us when we feel like we don't have a clear understanding of what we are called to do. However, Jeff suggests that the antidote to futility is to stop chasing your calling and start chasing your curiosity.

1. What are you curious about? What makes your heart come alive? What do people around you say about you? Are there ways you can start actively engaging with some of these things?

2. What are the specific assignments God has put in front of you? If you're not sure, spend some time asking God about this in prayer.

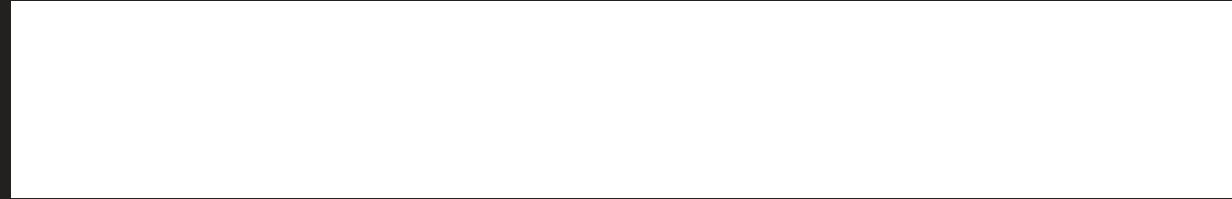
## A MAN WITH A CODE

Too many men today overemphasize their specific job's role in bringing meaning and purpose to their lives, and they underestimate the importance of the code they live by. We need men with codes. You need a North Star to define your direction, a purpose to dedicate yourself to. What's your code? Draft a code you want to live by below.



## TIME TO PLAY

How often do you engage in play and what does that look like? How can you create rhythms of play throughout your weeks and what would that look like? Who can you invite into these moments of play with you?



*"A [man] should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects."*

- Robert Anson Heinlein

# SESSION 8:

## THE SHADOW OF APATHY

### SESSION RECAP

Men today lack. They lack direction in life. They lack purpose and drive. They lack initiative in relationships. They lack energy and a sense of vocational call. The enemy's most effective strategy to destroy men is to lull them to sleep with apathy -to ease them into a sense that there is nothing to do, nothing to become, nothing to fight -to get them to sip the sweet wine of self-pity and despair and never realize their strength. If Satan can't destroy your faith, he will try to get you to settle for a shadow version of it. But your time matters, your vision matters, you matter. Your life is worth more than you know. When you cast off the shadow of apathy and lean into the fullness of all God has for you, you will use your strength for the good of others. All it takes for evil to be overcome is for good men, like you, to *do something*.

### FROM FATHER TO GENERAL

Jon writes, *"We all know God as father... But there is another view of God, one that is overlooked and confronts the spirit of apathy so many men face. God is a general. He is mighty in battle and skilled in war... You are a soldier. You are in a fight" (161)*. How does this image of God as a general impact you? How could seeing yourself as a soldier change you, how you go about life, and the decisions you make?



### DISENTANGLING CIVILIAN AFFAIRS

In 2 Timothy 2:4, Paul warns Timothy to not get entangled with civilian affairs. He's urging Timothy to watch out for the things that would pull his energy and attention away from the post to which God had called him. Paul wasn't referring to things that were sinful or bad in and of themselves -just those things that can lead to distraction. To apathy. On page 167, Jon says, *"We take these small things, these innocent things, and we weave them into our schedules. We weave them into our imaginations, we weave them through our resources, and the next thing we know, we are caught up and can't break free."*

1. What civilian affairs have you weaved into your life?

2. What are those civilian affairs costing you? (Think in terms of time, resources, energy, attention, relationally, etc.)

3. Pray the Lord gives you the grace (the supernatural ability) to disentangle your heart and attention from these civilian affairs. What practical steps can you take today to begin the process of unweaving?

## APATHY AUDIT

1. Where do you feel you lack the most in your life? Where has the shadow of apathy set in on your everyday?

2. What would it look like and how would it impact you and those around you if you did not experience lack and apathy in these areas?

3. Spend some time talking to God about whatever most resonated in your heart from this section. Cry out to him for a vision of a life of consequence and significance. Ask Him for more zeal, more passion, and more conviction as you pursue Him and His Kingdom purposes.

*"It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effice is to edge the man away from the light and out into the nother. murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. indeed the safest road to hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."*

- C.S. Lewis