



## Shadows & Design

By Tom Brown

A few years ago, I was responsible for an aviation program in Africa. Our local regulator implemented a short notice, nationwide program to recertify every operator and our organizational existence was suddenly at stake. Needless to say, I felt a tremendous weight. We had a critical job to do, and I wasn't about to be the one who let the program fail. I pushed both myself and my staff hard. For over six months, we spent late nights, weekends, and supposed days off scrambling to keep up. At home, my reliability for my wife and kids disappeared as they took a back seat to my need for success at work. When it finally ended, not only had we survived but were held up as an industry example. Organizationally, we celebrated the victory. Personally, my family was a disaster.

By God's grace, we were scheduled for a 10-day retreat as a family although it took me several days to recognize just how bad things had become. I had spent the last 6 months holding myself together, building internal walls to keep things contained, and asserting that it was all under control. In reality, I was

a wreck, emotionally exhausted and disconnected from everyone around me. God allowed that retreat to begin a restoration and healing process that was miraculous. Our family went into the time in dis-array but came out re-committed to each other and unified in our sense of purpose together.

### Lies and shadows

Looking back, I had fallen into the lie that success offered a promise of satisfaction, when in reality, it simply left brokenness. And in that realization was a deeper truth that brokenness, and satisfaction derived from all the things we pursue in life, are shadows cast by something greater. They are the shadows of a God-given design intended to draw us to Him, to cause us to lift our earth-bound eyes to look up and realize there is One who offers us deeper satisfaction. Too often though, we simply chase the shadow that seems most accessible, and then when we catch it, we wonder why we still find ourselves feeling disappointed. And so, on we continue to chase something else, never noticing that catching a shadow always leaves your hands empty.



## Design

If however, we learn to see the design instead of chasing its shadow, things can be different. Sure, the allure to chase those shadows is still there, and sometimes I still do chase them, but when my hands come up empty I don't just keep chasing. Instead, it reminds me to look up and ask what I was really looking for, and to see where it is found in a life centered around God.

It begins though with a fundamental choice to integrate; to embrace yourself and the world around you in all its beauty and brokenness. It requires an understanding that you were made for holistic peace with everything and everyone, and that you will always long for it, and never fully experience it this side of heaven. The wonderful thing is that if you embrace these two truths of integration and peace, you open the door to an entirely different way of leading and managing.

Through that door are treasures of immeasurable worth as you learn to lead yourself, your work, and those around you into a life that weaves brokenness and beauty into something redemptive.

What areas of brokenness and beauty are beckoning you? Embrace them. Redeem them. Restore the world around you.