

HEAL YOUR HURTING MIND

**Biblical Hope for Anxiety, Depression, Burnout,
and the Emotions No One Talks About**

CRAIG GROESCHEL

WITH DR. WAYNE CHAPPELLE

 **ZONDERVAN
BOOKS**

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Heal Your Hurting Mind

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This book contains discussions related to mental health, which may include descriptions of anxiety, depression, trauma, or other emotional struggles. It is intended for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing mental health challenges, please seek the guidance of a qualified healthcare provider or contact a mental health professional in your area.

To protect the privacy of individuals and respect confidentiality, the names and identifying details of certain people, places, and events have been changed.

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INTRODUCTION

ME (WHEN I CRASHED)

My meltdown didn't happen all at once but slowly rolled into my life like a dense, dark fog. At first my plan for dealing with it was to use one of my favorite coping mechanisms: denial. I would tell myself, *It's not all that bad. It's just a really hard season. I can handle this, just like I have before.*

But the dread just kept closing in on me. Like an emotional claustrophobia. I started to realize, *Maybe this is too much.*

I tried my best to keep showing up for everyone and being consistent, but the sense of impending doom wouldn't stop creeping in. I finally admitted, *This is going to get me.*

Then one day, I gave in to my worst fear: *I think this is probably going to kill me.*

I was almost three decades into being a happily married, respected pastor with a bunch of well-adjusted kids, but I realized, aside from all those blessings, I was trapped in a dark place. I was terrified and had no idea who I could tell or how to escape my feelings.

I will go into more detail later about my downward spiral. (I don't want to scare you off this early in the book.)

But I remember yelling at God in the depths of my pain, asking why he allowed this to happen to me. I can't be sure, but I wonder whether part of the reason God allowed me to go through what I did is to be able to share what I learned. Because my experience led me to this book I never expected to write.

So for that reason, this is going to be intense.

And fun.

And incredibly important.

But definitely intense.

Why intense?

Because I'm going to take you deep into my personal life and tell you things you'd never expect to hear from a pastor. If you've read any of my books, listened to my sermons or episodes of my podcast, you may feel like you know a little about me.

Okay, but you don't know this story.

Why so important?

Because we're also going to offer you the opportunity to go deep into your life. While I'm sure you know yourself, I bet there are things you don't understand about yourself. Like why do you feel so sad? Or angry? Or worried? How do you quiet your anxiety? Heal from trauma? Break through your burnout?

If you've ever asked yourself these questions, you're not alone. That's me too. And that's why I want to introduce you to someone who helped me find answers. Meet Dr. C.

DR. C. (WHOM I CALLED WHEN I CRASHED)

This may be a good time to acknowledge that I'm a pastor, not a psychologist or doctor. Though I've read more than a dozen books on this subject and consulted with as many Christian counselors, I am certainly not an expert. As a pastor, I will always focus more on the spiritual side of these issues and how God can bring healing and give us freedom. But the psychological and physiological aspects of healing are too important not to include.

So I've decided to take a bit of a risk.

Let me explain.

When I hit the emotional wall that I'll start unpacking in the next chapter, I felt like my life was coming unraveled. Thankfully, I got help from a unique and gifted Christian counselor named Dr. Wayne Chappelle. I say "unique" because Dr. C. (as I will call him throughout the book) has a broad range of experience.

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After getting his doctorate in clinical psychology at George Fox University, Dr. C. worked for more than twenty years with top-level military and government officials helping to assess and prepare them for high-risk, high-demand classified military operations. His work included debriefing officials at the Pentagon and commanders across the world on the psychological effects of dangerous and often deadly missions. He was a consultant on decisions that had an effect on strengthening the mental health and resilience of military personnel fighting terrorism across the globe and on improving collaboration with joint military forces from allied nations.

More recently, Dr. C. spearheaded the development of psychological assessment and selection processes for aircrews tasked with safely and discreetly transporting high-ranking government and presidential leadership across the globe.

After fulfilling his duties with the air force, Dr. C. shifted his work to professional and Olympic-level athletes. His focus is strengthening athletes' mental toughness so they can thrive in the most demanding competitive environments. This includes helping athletes manage their mental health to move them closer to becoming the best versions of themselves (personally and professionally) and being able to succeed under extraordinary conditions.

If you're wondering why a guy like that would work with a pastor like me, join the club. Because of his deep faith in Jesus, Dr. C. became open to using his gifts and experience to help in a different type of warfare: spiritual warfare. I was the first pastor he counseled, but he now works with dozens of Christian leaders as he devotes a significant portion of his time to serving those who serve God.

To ensure this book helps you on the deepest level possible, I've invited Dr. C. to contribute his wisdom. I asked him to help me, as well as to vet the entire book from a professional and clinical standpoint. He'll also give you his personal responses at the end of each chapter, called "Dr. C.'s Reflection."

Hopefully you agree that's a pretty good idea, but like I said earlier, it's a risk.

Why?

Ready?

Because I'm taking it one step farther and giving Dr. C. permission to share with you details of every issue I've faced. I'm voluntarily removing doctor-patient confidentiality because he stood with me during my lowest times and

saw my every vulnerability, insecurity, and sinful inclination, helping me to come out on the other side significantly stronger.

My prayer is that giving you his professional insight into my journey toward healing will help you on yours.

YOU (HELP FOR WHEN YOU CRASH)

**IF YOU FEEL HELPLESS OR HOPELESS,
I HAVE GOOD NEWS FROM THE OTHER
SIDE: THERE IS HOPE.**

Years ago, I would have had no idea how anyone suffering from a mental health issue might be feeling. But after breaking down and falling into an extended time of crippling anxiety and dark depression, I now know what it's like to feel helpless and hopeless. Honestly, as a follower of Jesus, I never thought I could or would feel that way. But I did. I found myself so deep in the pit that I feared nothing could pull me out. I had lost hope that things could ever get better.

If that's where you are—if you feel helpless, hopeless—I have good news from the other side.

There is hope.

I get that may sound too good to be true right now. But there is hope. Because God will help you. We're going to learn why that's true, and learn how that's true, in this book. Together we're going to explore some powerful principles for how God helps us with our:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Negativity
- Anger
- Trauma
- Burnout

If you are feeling stuck, like you're beyond help, can I encourage you to hold on? Because in the pages to come, God is going to lead us toward healing.

Hold on, and as you continue reading, I'd like to ask you to commit to radical honesty. With whom? With God and with yourself. And you might

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want to invite a friend (or your small group or support group) to read along and take this journey with you.

I've learned that radical honesty is foundational.

Because you are only as strong as you are honest.

M. Scott Peck, a psychiatrist and bestselling author, writes in his book *The Road Less Traveled*, "Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs."¹

Being radically honest is intimidating, even frightening, so let's ask God for help. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness but a sign of wisdom. In John 5, when Jesus came upon a man in Jerusalem who had been suffering for thirty-eight years, he asked him, "Would you like to get well?" (v. 6 NLT). So let's trust that if we also come to him, honestly, truly desiring Jesus' help, he will lead us on a path toward healing and mental health.

ASKING FOR HELP ISN'T A SIGN OF WEAKNESS BUT A SIGN OF WISDOM.

So if you're ready to hear some brutal honesty about the worst time in my life, ready to hear what I learned from God and from my amazing counselor during my darkest moments, ready to experience your own healing and emotional wellness, turn the page.

I waited patiently for the LORD to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.
—*Psalm 40:1–2 NLT*

DR. C.'S REFLECTION

I consider it an honor to contribute to such an important book that I know will help you. Whether you're trying to improve your life or come alongside someone who is struggling, each section of this book has the potential to help you or others survive and thrive through the emotional battles we all tend to experience at some point in our lives.

Before I go any farther, I have to say that Craig's introduction of me made my life sound way more exciting than it is. And it's not that my skills are any better than others, I've simply been blessed with a broad range of experiences that have equipped me to help people grow and excel during challenging periods in life.

I am deeply humbled that Craig chose to work with me. I'm thankful he has given me permission to share parts of his story and experiences in counseling that we both hope will help you work through the emotional struggles in your life.

The process of change and growth is not easy and there are many obstacles along the way. It's going to take some real work, some raw honesty, and some fierce courage to take the journey toward healing. But with God's help, I know he will direct our steps. If you're ready, I am. I know Craig is. Let's get to work. Your mental health is worth it.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why do you think, for so long in our culture, that openness and honesty have been avoided regarding mental and emotional health, as well as specific struggles like depression and anxiety?
2. Why do you suppose so many people, regardless of factors like age, race, and income, refuse to ask others for help with mental and emotional issues?
3. Understanding that we all struggle with some degree of mental, emotional, and spiritual issues, what battles have you faced, past or current? Be as specific as you are comfortable with.
4. What are you looking for or hoping can happen in your life as you read and work through the material in this book?