

the power of brokenness

the language of healing

glen kerby & jim mccraigh

based on biblical principles

Salt River
ministries

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This book is dedicated to the Spirit of God, our wives, the problems we have faced in our lives and our friendship for one another. Without God's inspiration, the pain of the past, the contribution and encouragement of our families, friends and the gifts of those who have come to support the effort of this ministry, we would have nothing to dedicate. May it be a blessing to you.

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introduction

As we struggle to find answers in difficult times, certain words can take on entirely new meanings for us. In this study, we will explore twelve such words that people of faith use every day. We will see how they relate to the process of growing closer to God through the power of Jesus Christ. These words of healing are for all of us who are sick and tired of anything that may be destroying our lives. They are for all of us who want to stop living in fear, anxiety, emotional pain, shame or guilt. They are for all of us who want to separate ourselves from the issues of the past. These words are for all of us who want to start over again with the help of a loving God who will forgive us.

At the same time, words can also be easily misunderstood. Confusing the meaning of these words can separate us from understanding truth and our fellow believers. This can cause us to have difficulty with communicating our faith and struggles with one another. It is our hope that this study will help you find the right words to share your experience, strength and hope with others or that you will better understand others as they share their's with you!

Since the beginning, language has been one of God's most powerful ways of communicating with us. Expressions like, "God's Word" or Christ is "the Word having become flesh" are vital to our understanding of God and seeking His truth. *There is nothing more powerful than God's living word and Holy Spirit when we seek answers to life's problems.*

Our hope is that this study will help you to strengthen your faith and grow closer to Him. The process of healing and recovery is the process of restoration through Jesus Christ. No matter where we are in our own journey, one day or 25 years, these are the words that will help strengthen our Christian faith and point us towards the victorious life that God intends for each of us.

Glen Kerby and Jim McCraigh

²²But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another. (Galatians 5:22-26 NIV)

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Brokenness is the acknowledgment of grace where self-will is superseded by God's will. While righteousness demands payment for evil done, brokenness recognizes that payment can not be made regardless of our human effort and rejoices in the forgiveness of sin...

denial

we admit that apart from God, we were personally powerless over our behaviors and thoughts and that our lives had become unmanageable...

Read: John 10:10 (That you may have life)

de-ni-al: noun

(Dictionary): refusal to admit the truth or reality

(Faith): a self-protecting behavior that keeps us from honestly facing the truth with God and others

A fuel truck driver was on a delivery run during a raging blizzard in the days before CB radios and cell phones. While traveling along a dark, deserted stretch between two isolated towns, the truck skidded off the road and wound up hopelessly stuck. As the storm passed and sunrise came, the temperature dropped to nearly 40° below zero. The driver stayed with the truck in the hopes that someone would pass by and rescue him. After many hours of waiting, he ran out of diesel fuel. Without the engine running, the truck's heater was useless. When police found him later the next day, he had frozen to death.

This kind of tale is not uncommon in the northern parts of Canada. It seems that hardly a winter goes by that someone isn't lost. The thing that makes this story so remarkable is that the driver had 10,000 gallons of diesel fuel in the tanker he was hauling. At first glance it would seem there was no way to move it from the tanker into the truck in order to keep it running. But when we heard this story, we immediately thought that there must have been some way to do that. The driver could have saved his life if he would have just tried something, anything! If he would have just focused his energy on using the resources that he had in the situation that he found himself in, he would have survived.

Many of us find ourselves in the same kind of place. Something (a behavior, an attitude or a relationship) is killing us. There are answers or resources close at hand, but somehow it seems impossible for us to reach them or put them into action. We are comfortable in the cab of the truck, hopeful that someone will come and rescue us or that our situation will somehow change by itself. For many of us, the fear of what we will find if we leave our "truck" often seems so much worse than the actual issues with which we struggle.

Denial is also self-protecting behavior that kills. We need to clearly see and admit the problems we face for what they are. We need to see that the pain we may be in right now can become one of the most valuable assets we'll ever have.

"recovery"

The formal process of dealing with the issues in our lives that create the symptoms that cause us to live lives that are less than what God has intended for us.

Our journey through the language of healing will be a roadmap that we can take with us as we face the truth about where we are in our lives. It will, with the help of God, direct us to a new life that is so full of promise that we may doubt at times that we are worthy of it! Be assured that you are worthy of a life that is filled with peace, joy and love. These are promises that cannot be taken away from us as people of faith. What we need to do is seek God, along with the truth. Then we will be in a position to overcome the denial that has kept us from becoming people who can make healthy choices about our lives, hearts and families.

No matter how small the issue seems, unchecked anger, gambling, shame, guilt, food, work, isolation, codependency, or pornography, it can only lead us into deeper pain. Out of control addictions can lead to lost lives, to the breakdown of family relationships and to the destruction of personal and professional lives. Unfettered gossip, complaining and grumbling only serve to injure others. The sting of divorce or grief doesn't get any better without admitting the pain, dealing with it and finding help to fight off bitterness, despair and resentment.

Denial stalls us in our healing and recovery from life's difficulties and hampers our spiritual growth. With it comes an ever-present temptation to disregard the root cause of our symptoms and charge ahead unchanged. When in denial, our hope is based on the false notion that things will change for the better only if we take control of things ourselves.

Denial is universal in recovery and even in the church. Even for someone seeking to grow in their faith or change their life in a Christ-centered program, the issue of denial will appear again and again. Very few of us have not struggled to admit the truth about our lives. For a person trying to overcome their denial, it can feel like one of the most difficult things they have ever had to do; despite the overwhelming evidence that surrendering the garbage of our past lives is a good thing. Being open to God's voice is the first step down a life changing path. But how do we get there?

We always have the opportunity to hold up a white flag and call the whole war off. But, it isn't the waving of the white flag that is painful; it is everything that leads up to the decision to surrender that is difficult. Overcoming denial is the great dividing point in the life of anyone who has faced it. It is important to separate the pain of coming to the point of admitting we are powerless from the decision to change our lives.

We can stop the behaviors and still be hopelessly lost in denial. We can discontinue acting out with the anger, pornography, overeating, drugs, alcohol, or codependency and falsely believe that we are in control of our situation. We can be a person who has given up on our guilt, fixing others, perfectionism or gambling but still spend time gossiping or complaining about the awful condition of our lives, family or church. If we simply stop the behaviors, we'll likely remain just as lost as we have ever been. This is because the ways in which we choose to act out are simply symptoms of a much bigger problem. This is exactly why we need to admit our powerlessness and the unmanageable nature of our own lives if we truly desire true life change.

The decision to overcome denial is a decision to seek healing. If we want to get better, we can. If we want to remain in the place of pain where we are now, we can do that too. The decision is ours. God wants a relationship with us. He will stand at the door and knock until the last moment we draw breath on this planet.

***20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.
Revelation 3:20 (NIV)***

The stark contrast between this way of thinking and the way the world likes to handle problems is why the authors of this book believe this verse was divinely inspired. The worldview says, build up the individual, the answer is already within you and that self-help solutions work. God’s way is to create strength through admission of weakness; power through confessing brokenness and victory through surrender to Him. These are most certainly not human ideas.

recognizing and overcoming denial

How do you know if you are in denial? Ask yourself these questions and write your answers below:

1. Has your relationship with God been damaged by things that you have been doing?

2. Has your ability to serve others in need been compromised by what you are doing, (or been done to you)?

“shame”

self-condemning thoughts that create a desire for us to avoid any subject, group, counseling or assistance that will force us to admit our own failures

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3. Do you believe that what you are struggling with has made you angry or come between you and God?

4. Has what you are struggling with come between you and your family?

5. Have your struggles caused you to neglect responsibilities at home or at work?

If you can say yes to any of these questions, you have a problem. If you're not doing anything about the problem, you are in denial. Denial is a self-imposed prison. But if you face the truth, you can escape!

When we know better and continue acting out (engage in destructive behaviors), we are truly in denial and rebelling against God. Living in anger, bitterness, loneliness and pain never leads to peace or freedom. When in denial, we face feelings of being out of control, failure, loneliness and inability to relate to others. This leaves us fighting a spiritual battle with our own strength alone.

The desire to look outside of ourselves for comfort comes from who God created us to be. We need to find our worth not in ourselves alone, but as a child of God! But, more times than not, we get stuck somewhere between God and ourselves. Rather than pursuing a relationship with Him, we start substituting other things that we're more comfortable with. These include people, places and things; hanging on to past behaviors; hoping things will get better on their own or just simply blaming others.

people, places and things

Glen Kerby, one of the authors of this book, relates the following about the two years before he entered recovery:

“I managed to move five times within four different cities. I was constantly looking for a better stereo system, a better car, a better girlfriend, a better job, a better city, or a new career. I wanted to find anything that would help me make more money, attend more parties or meet more friends... anything that could help to distract me from the real problem. I was living a lie that had no end. Every day I was looking to fill myself up by acting out in my narcotics addiction. I suffered endless shame and guilt; endured constant turmoil and felt ongoing physical, emotional and spiritual pain. But, I still remained in denial that I had a problem.”

You don't have to be addicted to alcohol or narcotics to be in denial. It can be a failure to admit problems with things such as codependency, rage, compulsive spending, overeating or lust. This dependence on people, places and things usually comes from a desire to minimize our problems or to blame others for our own shortcomings like:

- ◆ It's only a problem when they are around
- ◆ He drinks way more than I do and nobody bothers him
- ◆ I only bet on weekends
- ◆ Lots of people have affairs
- ◆ I can't get away from the people that I act out with
- ◆ This city depresses me, no wonder I have this problem
- ◆ If only he would stop treating me that way

“codependent”

Seeking, to be fulfilled, personal identity or approval from others at the expense of our personal well being or our relationship with God.

hanging on to past behaviors

Have you ever watched a friend or relative in a relationship that you knew was bad for them, but they couldn't seem to break free from it? You saw them suffer through all the arguments, all the chaos and all of the pain that the relationship brought with it but wondered why they could not cut it off? The answer is that the relationship was satisfying something deep inside of them, no matter how crazy that may seem.

We stay in denial in the same way. We search for any water to quench a never-ending thirst that we have, as polluted as that water may be. We are thirsty and that's the only water we can conceive of. We don't hope for something better because we don't believe that there is such a thing. We think, "People don't really live that way. They are all as screwed up as I am, but they just have the resources to pretend better than I can." We will stay stuck in that kind of muddy, stagnant water until we understand that there is a different place to drink from that is clear, cold, fresh and alive.

God often uses water as an illustration in both the Old and New Testament. In this case, He asks us to reject the past and the old places we've gone to quench our thirst. He wants us to come to Him instead. God has something great in store for us, he just needs us to reject the polluted waters of our past lives and accept His offer instead.

"everything will be better tomorrow"

In the midst of our pain, it's easy to buy into the lie that today's mistakes will be repaired by tomorrow's actions. People in recovery learn the expression "one day at a time" early in their small group experience. That "one day" is not tomorrow and it is not yesterday. That day is today.

satan* wants to defeat us in overcoming our denial by choosing the battle ground on which we wage war with him. If he can fight with us in the past or in the future, then we lose the battle to be liberated from our hurts, habits and hang ups. If he can convince us to put off decisions that we need to make today in the hope that things will be better tomorrow, we will fail. If we accept a lifestyle where we endure the pain of today in the false hope that we will somehow do it differently tomorrow, we will never achieve the freedom that we desire.

To live lives of true peace, our only option is to make the decision to make today count. God wants us to make this the moment that we admit our brokenness and step out of our denial. This is the only moment in which He can minister to us... not yesterday or next week. He does forgive us for the past if we accept His Son and ask for forgiveness. God promises to provide for us in the future if we live within His will in the present.

God wants us to live in the moment; where we can be empowered by Him to release the damage of the past and to give up worry about tomorrow. All we have to do is be willing to come to Him without denial, admit our powerlessness and let Him start acting.

* The name of satan is purposely not capitalized in this book.

whose fault is it anyway?

Denial often leads to feelings of resentment and anger. Given enough time, this anger will turn itself against the very person who harbors it. The eventual result of that is often depression and feelings of worthlessness. In its worst form, it can even lead to thoughts of suicide in some people.

In the midst of anger we begin to look for the culprit. Who can we blame for our issues? We can direct our hate at those who have attacked or injured us... parents, spouses, relatives, employers, brothers, sisters, teachers or even strangers. We can also blame the church, religion, pastors, or anyone else we believe should have met our needs but didn't.

In the midst of our angry denial, we can eventually come to blame God. We begin to envision Him as a cosmic kill-joy who is forever torturing us. We come to see Him as some sort of genie in a bottle who did not come out to give us our three wishes and make things better. We make Him the target of our anger so we can rationalize the consequences of our own decisions by blaming Him for His lack of care and compassion.

When we are willing to come out of our denial by admitting that we have a part in all of this, only then can we begin to heal.

our response to God

When we are in Denial:

We invent a god that we can blame for how messed up we are (religion); or we create a new god for ourselves; a composite of many man-made belief systems (New Age); or we simply deny the relevance or existence of God (Atheism). In each case, there is one common denominator, our will or our logic is used to supersede the will of a loving and caring God in our life. We either put Him in a religious box, adding or subtracting attributes based on how we feel, or just ignore Him completely. No matter how you look at it, we are manipulating God in an effort to stay in our denial and maintain control of our lives and the lives of the people and circumstances around us.

Our Response Outside of Denial:

We admit that we are powerless, that our lives are unmanageable. We get out of the driver's seat and let God take the wheel. When we are in denial our lives are controlled by fear, anger, self-centeredness and paranoia. When we overcome denial we can give up that control and take what might be our first real look at who God is and what He wants for us.

biblical reference

¹⁸I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (Romans 7:18) NIV

“guilt”

self-condemning thoughts that result from the realization that damage has been done to others as a direct result of your personal actions

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This verse gives us a clear view of what is at stake in the decision to take the first step towards healing and recovery. If we try to manage our own lives apart from God, we will be guided by the same nature that put us in the very mess we are trying to get out of. The apostle Paul admits in this passage that he has the desire to do good, but that his weakness prevents him from accomplishing it on his own.

This is not a “be good and God will love you” message. This is a “God loves you right where you are right now” message. This is the Good News. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done! It doesn’t matter what has been done to you. All that matters is that you desire to have a relationship with Him. Christ came to tell us that God understands who we are. He understands our nature and wants us to trust Him to overcome the compulsive desires that lead to our destructive behaviors.

He wants to assist us in a relationship with Him where we are. He is not waiting for you to be perfect; he’s not waiting for you to remove your tattoo, get a hair cut, quit looking at pornography, stop gambling, cease overeating or clean up your act. He is waiting for you to get out of the way and overcome denial, so that He can take the place in your life He wants. He can help us if we will simply admit that we need help. He will give us answers if we simply admit that we don’t have them ourselves. He can carry the weight if we tell Him it is too heavy. He can forgive our sins if we confess that we have them!

In Romans Chapter 5, before Paul’s revelation about his struggle to do good, he tells us the good news about overcoming the bondage of denial to begin a lifetime of healing and fellowship.

“While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6) NIV

In recovery as in the relationship with Christ, we don’t need to start perfect, we just need to be willing to come out of our denial!

more questions for reflection

6. In what areas of your life have you admitted your powerlessness? What scares you about giving up control?

7. Could you be in denial about any area(s) of your life?

8. Have you seen the results of these self-defeating behaviors in your life?

9. Do you have a secret that you cannot share?

devotional verse

*¹When the Lord brought back his exiles to Jerusalem,
it was like a dream!*

*²We were filled with laughter,
and we sang for joy.
And the other nations said,
“What amazing things the Lord has done for them.”*

*³Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us!
What joy!*

*⁴Restore our fortunes, Lord,
as streams renew the desert.*

*⁵Those who plant in tears
will harvest with shouts of joy.*

*⁶They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the harvest.*

(Psalm 126) NLT