

4 Models of Mental Health in the Church—and Why They Don't Always Cut It

Clinical psychologist and *Churches That Heal* creator Dr. Henry Cloud believes the church has the power to heal. God has designed the body of Christ to come alongside the wounded and minister healing.

“Think about a body, the way that in Ephesians 4, it says the body heals itself as each part does its work,” he says. “If you think you have an infected finger, then you don’t amputate the finger and put it in a drawer with a book on anatomy. That’s not how it works. The book on anatomy describes that that finger has got to be connected to the body, and it’s the whole body that does its work. That’s how our bodies heal ourselves, and God’s designed the body of Christ in the same way.”

Although Dr. Cloud is not referring to mental illnesses that stem from a chemical imbalance in the brain, he does see incredible value in how the body of Christ can help the hurting.

“The Bible says to be not only hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word,” he says. “So, for example, you go memorize the Scriptures and you memorize the verse that says, ‘Weep with those who weep.’ Well, you actually have to put your Bible down and go sit down with somebody who’s hurting, or if you’re hurting, process your pain. So it’s in the Scriptures. They show us all of these healing processes, but we actually have to go do them.”

Dr. Cloud has observed four prevailing models of treating mental health issues in the church: the sin model, the truth model, the “spiritual retreat burp” model and the supernatural

model.

If you have an emotional or mental health issue, believers may tell you that you have sin in your life or you need more of the Word.

"If you're hurting, then you obviously don't know the Word," Dr. Cloud reflects on the truth model. "And then you get more of the Bible in your head and memorize the Bible and so on, and that'll heal all your hurts."

In the spiritual retreat burp model, he says, you are cleansed while on a retreat.

"You kind of burp out all the pain and invite God into the pain," Dr. Cloud says. "Certainly God does that as well, but it's not like that's the way everything is healed."

The fourth type is the supernatural model where "if you're depressed or something, then you need deliverance," he says.

Dr. Cloud believes the church can find truth in all four of those models, but there's more to it than these models allow.

"None of those are the whole picture at all about how we're actually healed from addictions and emotional issues and depression and anxiety and all these things we suffer from," he cautions, pointing to the Scriptures for "the kind of transformation the New Testament promises" and observing that the ground is level at the cross.

"We've all been wounded and we're identifying with each other's woundedness like He identified with us," Cloud says. "We don't have a high priest who can't empathize with our weaknesses. The book of Hebrews says the priestly function of the believer is one of incarnation. We are entering the suffering together, and that's where healing begins to happen."

In Christ and His church, there is hope.

“There is no more powerful answer in the world for these problems,” he says. “Jesus said that ‘the gates of hell will not prevail against My church.’ We’ve got the gates of hell prevailing in neighborhoods and homes and communities where there are depression and addictions, or ruling when there’s broken, really, really hurtful, dysfunctional relationships. But as we move into that darkness with salt and light and the healing balm of who He is in His ways, then we can turn the tide.”

To learn more, listen to the *Charisma Connection* podcast episode with Dr. Cloud.