

Former Pastor: This One Dangerous Teaching Is Killing the Church

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Former youth pastor Steve Austin recounts how he battled depression and panic attacks from a young age, and then almost died by suicide when he was older. He says that in the Pentecostal church he grew up in, he was taught that if you weren't healed from mental illness, it's because you don't have faith.

"I grew up, for the first almost 10 years of my life, in a very charismatic-type church," Austin says. "You're going down front to the altar every Sunday for prayers, healing and that's certainly a beautiful, wonderful thing. And I think miracles still happen and can happen. But I do think they're called miracles for a reason. Because we don't see them happening every day, not in the ... fall down and suddenly you're healed and the cancer's gone, the depression's gone [kind of way].

"... And so there was this sort of underlying teaching that if God didn't heal you, then it was on you, that you didn't have enough faith. And that's a really toxic teaching. It's just not true. And it's caused so many people to retreat and isolate. ... If you've got depression ... and you're lonely, you're isolated, you feel like, 'I can't let other people see the real me' ... we run from each other, we run from God, and it's killed the church."

Austin emphasizes the importance of community in helping get us through dark moments. His wife was the vessel through whom God portrayed His grace to Austin during his moments in the

hospital after attempting suicide, he says on the *Charisma News* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.

“She said, ‘If you don’t lie anymore, if you tell the truth, if you ask for help, ... go to therapy, take your meds—if you will do those things, I’m not leaving,’” Austin says. “And it broke me because that’s what we all love to hear, is that in your biggest mess, in your darkest moment, in your worst mess-up, God is present, and so often God is present with us through other people.

“So she said, ‘I don’t believe that the worst day of your life gets to define the rest of your life unless you let it.’ And that was the grace of God for me. That’s when I thought, *OK, if she stands by my side, if she’s fighting for me, fighting with me, for me, then maybe healing is possible.*”

To listen to the entire episode, [click here](#).