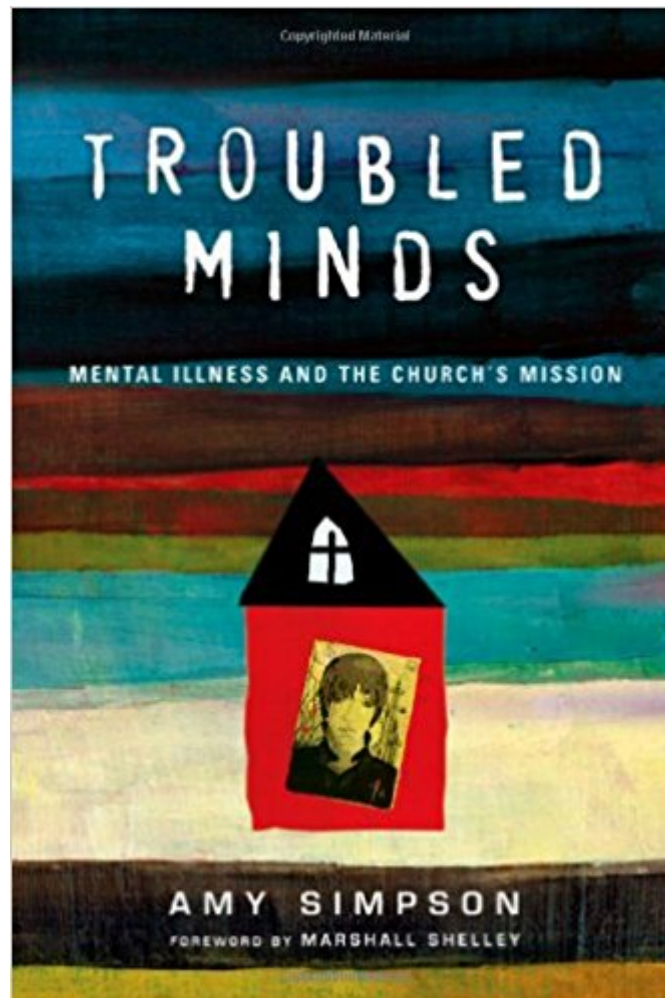




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Troubled Minds: Mental Illness And The Church's Mission



Synopsis

The 2014 Christianity Today Book Award Winner (Hermeneutics) Winner of a 2013 Leadership Journal Book Award ("Our Very Short List" in "The Leader's Outer Life" category) Mental illness is the sort of thing we don't like to talk about. It doesn't reduce nicely to simple solutions and happy outcomes. So instead, too often we reduce people who are mentally ill to caricatures and ghosts, and simply pretend they don't exist. They do exist, however—statistics suggest that one in four people suffer from some kind of mental illness. And then there's their friends and family members, who bear their own scars and anxious thoughts, and who see no safe place to talk about the impact of mental illness on their lives and their loved ones. Many of these people are sitting in churches week after week, suffering in stigmatized silence. In *Troubled Minds* Amy Simpson, whose family knows the trauma and bewilderment of mental illness, reminds us that people with mental illness are our neighbors and our brothers and sisters in Christ, and she shows us the path to loving them well and becoming a church that loves God with whole hearts and whole souls, with the strength we have and with minds that are whole as well as minds that are troubled.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Simpson's sensitive recounting of her experience growing up with a schizophrenic parent forms the foundation for a book that belongs underlined and dog-eared on the shelves of every church leader. *Troubled Minds* is far more than an introduction to the issues surrounding mental illness and the church. It is a call to practical discipleship for everyone who seeks to follow the One who spent

much of his ministry caring for the ill and those at the margins of society--often the same people." (Michelle Van Loon, "The 2014 Christianity Today Book Awards," Christianity Today, January/February 2014)"Amy Simpson gives deep insight into the pain of mental illness for those affected and those who love them. I count this a must-read for those of us in church leadership." (Karen Miller, "The 2014 Leadership Book Awards," Leadership Journal, Winter 2014)"In America, mental illness covers . . . a broad set of diagnoses. Simpson gives her readers a helpful, readable digest of mental illnesses. Well-researched and written in layman's terms without oversimplifying, she helps bring readers up to speed about the topic and the issues. . . . Her book is insightful, compassionate and timely. It is a must read for leaders of churches." (Michael R. Chancellor, The Baptist Standard, July 29, 2013)"Troubled Minds offers a thorough and well-researched overview of the realities of mental illness. But Simpson does not resort to professional jargon. The book's real strength lies in Simpson's empathy for those she interviewed, and the compassionate retelling of their stories. Readers will be far better prepared to care for those in their midst who struggle with mental illness. Finally, the book offers hope, both for those who are suffering and for church leaders awakened by Simpson's prophetic call for change. . . . Troubled Minds should prove to be an excellent resource for pastors and lay leaders who minister to the mentally ill." (Michael Mangis, Christianity Today, June 2013)"Having written about my own family's experience with mental illness, I know what it must have cost for Amy Simpson to root her highly informative book in her family's heartbreaking, yet hopeful story. Because of stigma and ignorance, far too many of us live with the pain of mental illness in silence and without compassionate support from our Christian communities. Troubled Minds has the potential to help free us from that quiet loneliness and bring our churches into fuller communion with those who suffer. I highly recommend it." (Christine A. Scheller, news and religion editor, UrbanFaith)"Get ready! Amy Simpson takes you on a thoughtful, vulnerable and even painful journey through the complex landscape of mental illness. There is hope, but not until you go to the emotional and textured depths Troubled Minds provides." (John Ortberg, senior pastor, and Charley Scandlyn, healing minister, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church)"Drawing on her own journey and extensive research, Amy Simpson gives deep insight into the pain of mental illness for those affected and those who love them. She makes puzzling concepts understandable, and she faces head-on the troubling questions raised by mental illness for people of faith. While I was reading the book, a homeless woman struggling with mental illness came to our church. Because of what I'd read, I interacted with her more patiently and effectively. I count this a must-read for pastors and church leaders." (Karen Miller, LCSW, executive pastor, Church of the Resurrection, Wheaton, Illinois)"In Troubled Minds Amy Simpson opens the door into the hidden struggles of those caring

for a mentally ill loved one. Between descriptions of her own real-life experiences she eloquently presents information that every Christian should have on how to recognize and appropriately respond to those living with mental illness. This book will prompt you (and your church) to action among a suffering people." (Matthew S. Stanford, professor of psychology and neuroscience, Baylor University, and author, *Grace for the Afflicted*) "With no shortage of brains or heart, Amy Simpson courageously explores the realities of mental illness in the twenty-first century. With mental illness on the rise, all church leaders would do well to read this theologically and psychologically compelling volume." (Linda Lake, clinical psychologist) "In more ways than one, [Simpson's] book shines a light in the darkness." (Jenny McDevitt, *Interpretation*, April 2016)

Amy Simpson (MBA, University of Colorado) is a passionate leader and communicator who loves to encourage Christ's church and its people to discern and fulfill their calling in this life. Amy is a former publishing executive who currently serves as editor of *Christianity Today's* *Gifted for Leadership* and senior editor of *Leadership Journal*. She is also a personal and professional Co-Active coach. She has spent nearly two decades as an award-winning writer, authoring numerous resources for Christian ministry, including *Diving Deep: Experiencing Jesus Through Spiritual Disciplines*, *In the Word: Bible Study Basics for Youth Ministry*, *Into the Word: How to Get the Most from Your Bible* and *Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church's Mission*. She has published articles with *Christianity Today*, *Leadership Journal*, *Today's Christian Woman*, *Christian Singles*, *Group* magazine, *Relevant*, *Her.meneutics*, and others. She has worked for Tyndale House Publishers, Group Publishing, Gospel Light, Standard Publishing, LifeWay, Focus on the Family, and *Christianity Today*. Amy holds an English degree from Trinity International University and an MBA from the University of Colorado. She is deeply in love with her incredible husband, Trevor, and extremely proud of her two fantastic kids. She lives with these wonderful people in Illinois, where she is committed to using the gifts God has given her in work that changes the world. Visit Amy's website at www.amysimpsononline.com or follow her on Twitter at @aresimpson.

This book review first appeared on my blog, crazygrace.org. During Amy Simpson's youth, her mother developed schizophrenia. She knows firsthand the traumas and difficulties of families with mental illness. That's why she writes with such passion and compassion for others who struggle with mental health problems. In particular, she points out the many ways the church has failed people with mental health issues. In her book, *Troubled Minds:*

Mental Illness and the Church's Mission, Simpson addresses the practical and theological issues that feed misunderstanding about mental illness in church communities. But she doesn't leave her message at "do better," she goes on to share the success stories of churches who intentionally reach out to people through mental health ministries. She describes specific actions the church or individuals can take to help people who experience a mental health crisis. And she offers her vision for the future, in which the church becomes a safe place for broken people. Troubled Minds should be mandatory reading for every seminary student and pastor. It is a much-needed book in today's church. Amy Simpson offers the wisdom that comes from experience to shed light on the darkness within the church.

It's tragic if the place we go to for spiritual comfort gives us a stone instead of bread. Troubled minds are not a THREAT to the church, they are a MISSION of the church. However, if you are suffering with a family member who is suffering with a thought disorder or a mood disorder, then you will soon exhaust all of your own resources, and you MUST turn to someone else for help, or just collapse into survival mode, and hope you can outlast the problem. The solution is never easy. However, all any of us can use is the resources to make it through the day. And that's something that our brothers and sisters CAN help us with.

The narrator speaking in this audio book seems so genuine. God is using this book in my life tremendously. The author put into words what I simply could not. Whether you know someone personally who struggles with mental illness or personally struggle with mental illness, I strongly urge you to get your hands on this book (I personally love reading physical books, but I am so glad I purchased the audio mp3 version for this particular book) to conclude, this book has helped me better understand what Jesus wants to do through both those who struggle with mental illness and those who care for those who struggle with mental illness.

Nearly everyone is touched by mental illness - directly or indirectly - at some point. 1 in 4 people are suffering from a mental illness at any time, and the figure is higher for those who have at some point during their life. Antipsychotics are the best-selling class of drugs in the US. Nearly every church has recognized mental illness in its congregation, and yet the vast majority do nothing to care for those suffering, and don't know how to care for them. Some can even make it worse. Ours is supposed to be a community where the hurting, broken and sin-scarred find rest and redemption;

where everyone present owns up to being a hurting, broken and sin-scarred individual, rescued from the ultimate death, the ultimate suffering - which we deserve - by the grace of God. An outstanding and challenging book. Some things I don't think of as mental illness and there are things we can address and help people manage. I am convicted for not having been aware or sensitive enough.

I know full well the problem of mental illness and the church. She came from a Baptist background her mom with schizophrenia always having to hide it. She is blessed in leadership circles, and I heard of the book from an article on Christianity Today. I came to be a Christian from the Pentecostal background around the time of the Word Faith movement. Though I did not follow that, it was always about not having enough faith for my wife's bipolar and later my diagnosis of dysthymia (low grade depression). I was always curious as to why so little is done for those in the church that suffer most. 25% of us have some type of mental illness This makes them our own country an unreached people group. Nevertheless for every physical illness there is enough support to help that group. As for me it tells me that I have to focus on comforting them that also have this.

This book fills an important void discussing the church's response to mental illness. I loved everything about it, from the author's brave recounting of her family's struggle with her mother's mental illness, case studies of others, the lack of resources, the stigma of society, scripture reference and a compassionate view of all who struggle with this disease whether they are the one battling mental illness or a loved one battles it. The thing I loved the most was that Simpson left us with hope, and in a world that is so devoid of help for those struggling with mental illness, hope is so important. We, as a society need to put our fears away to reach out to those who suffer. Churches are an obvious means of support, yet many turn a blind eye because it's easier to blame the victim. Simpson challenges churches to step up and minister to the least of the least--those whose scars are not so visible, and those who don't fit comfortably in society's expectations or norms. Another strength of the book is that she asks the hard questions about mental illness and sin. While she admits she can't answer every one of those questions completely, she provides some thoughtful insight to scripture and illness. She has an index of additional reading material, resource organizations, films and churches who have implemented programs to reach out. so that the conversation may be started.

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