

**CLINGING TO FAITH
THROUGH DOUBT
AND DEPRESSION**

LOSING GOD

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IVP Books

An imprint of InterVarsity Press
Downers Grove, Illinois

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Preface

PEOPLE WRESTLING SEVERE DEPRESSION and unresolved doubts about their faith often feel isolated, as if no one in the world understands their pain. This was certainly true of me during my four-year battle. Throughout the struggle, and for years after, I searched in vain for a book I felt captured the horror of unrelenting anxiety and despair. Doubt can give rise to depression, and depression to doubt, yet the market appeared devoid of a book that acknowledged this relationship.

Most books on depression and doubt seemed written by people who had suffered neither or who failed to demonstrate how these dual struggles often intermingle. Furthermore, many of the best works on mental illness or spiritual doubt were written as information-heavy, “how-to” books, suggesting ways and means of finding freedom. While this was all well and good—education is helpful—none of these books offered much solace. What I really wanted was just to know that someone, *anyone*,

had shared my pain and asked my questions—and had made it out the other side with their faith intact. I wanted a story.

I never found such a book. *Losing God* is my attempt at writing it. This is the tale of my journey through, and eventual healing from, a very long, dark night. One reviewer of this book suggested that I offer a light at the end of the tunnel sooner than I do. He wondered why I waited so long to introduce hope. One might ask the same of the biblical book of Job. Why so many chapters before a resolution?

Because that is the way the story happened.

Depression does not come with encouragement. It is a void, a vacuum, a terrible blackness. Rarely does it permit its sufferers the belief in better days ahead. One goal in writing this book was to paint a vivid and accurate picture of the *experience* of depression and doubt. Whether I have succeeded is up to the reader, but had I inserted little enticements to carry on—“Don’t give up! It’s going to turn out all right!”—I would have poorly served both the story and the reader because, frankly, that is not depression, and it was not my experience.

I will be quite happy if the ill walk away from this book convinced that someone else in the world can relate, and if the healthy walk away truly understanding depression and doubt despite never having endured them. For that reason, I have kept the book short but honest, introducing hope when it actually appeared. Thus, the first half of the story is dark, but it is true.

Along the way, I will comment on methods of treatment for depression and doubt, but I offer these tips within the context

Preface

of my story. For readers desiring a set of steps toward healing, I offer an appendix to that effect at the end. A couple of other things to know before reading the book: (1) I talk often about the Urbana Student Missions Convention and the emotional struggle that developed there and after. I would like the reader to know that nothing negative that happened to me at Urbana was the result or fault of the conference or its organizers. Urbana has, for decades, served to ignite the hearts of young people for a life of devotion to Jesus throughout the world. I have the utmost respect for Urbana and encourage college students interested in missions to attend. (2) At times, I have changed names and minor details in the story to protect the identity of the individuals discussed. All incidents described, however, are real. Again, this is a true story.

If you have come to this book at a moment of crisis, my prayer is that you will find some comfort in what I tell here. If my story and some of the answers I found cannot end your own darkness, may they at least give you hope enough to hold on for light. The path to healing is often wet with the tears of anguished people pleading for help but not giving up when that help seems slow in coming. These people owe their peace to their perseverance. I wish the same for you.