

Unstuck



Your Life. God's Design. Real Change.

Arnie Cole + Michael Ross

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Starting Point

When Faith Gets Stuck

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

—John 10:10

Something's gone wrong.

Praying doesn't seem to work anymore; I'm bored with church, and the church crowd. Half the time the Bible doesn't make sense to me—that is, when I slow down enough to actually read it (which isn't often). If I'm really honest with myself, I don't have a clue what God is like . . . or what He wants from me.

I play church and act as if I have it all together. But inside, I'm tired.

Tired of the fog, tired of running hard but never getting anywhere, tired of faking it, tired of missing the things I want most: real purpose . . . real life.

My faith isn't working—and I don't know how to fix it.

Maybe you've been having similar thoughts. It's like a three-hundred-pound gorilla is sharing the room with you. You can see it, others probably can't—yet you're terrified to open your mouth. *What would they think?*

We're talking about the disconnected sense you wake up with most Sundays; an annoying thought that grows into a big hairy beast when worship hour rolls around. It starts beating its chest whenever the congregation breaks into songs like "Amazing Grace."

Yes, I'm a wretch. Yes, I've been saved. Yet most days I'm still pretty lost, and horribly blind. My life is supposed to be different—somehow better than it is now. But it isn't. Something's gone wrong.

The thing is, the gorilla doesn't just come around Sunday mornings. It sometimes hangs around 24/7. You've tried to live with it, even ignore it. Nothing's worked.

Like we said, you're not the only one struggling spiritually. In this book you'll . . .

Meet Theresa. She was raised in a legalistic church and told that staying in line, following the rules, steering clear of life's "don'ts" would make her acceptable to God. "Read your Bible, go to church, and say your prayers," was her preacher's motto. One night Theresa, who was twenty-four at the time, woke up in a cold sweat: *Is this really it? Just rules and checklists and striving to get stamped with approval? Something's gone wrong.*

Meet Gene. He'd battled a porn addiction that began at age twelve. Each Sunday this church leader was all smiles and handshakes. The rest of the week this middle-aged man lost most days spiritually before they began. *I know old struggles don't always go away when you give your life to Jesus. I don't know any man who's never fallen to temptation. Yet I've been a believer most of my life. Something's gone wrong.*

Meet Kelly. Her family had money and prestige: a palatial home in the nicest part of town, expensive cars, designer clothes, popular friends—everything girls her age think they want. If only they knew her parents abused alcohol—and her. Belt buckles. Dark closets. Nightmares. Unthinkable dysfunction. Eventually Kelly grew up, moved out . . . and tried to convince herself that the past was finally behind her. And she hoped it was. *But I can't seem to trust anyone—not my pastor, not my husband, not even God. I'm thirty-eight, and anxious and angry all the time. I want to let go and move on, but I can't. Something's gone wrong.*

Meet Shane. He was quick to admit his life was a mess—started out that way. His parents abandoned him when he was small, pawning him off on his grandmother. Things got messier through the years, mostly because of alcohol and drug abuse. He hit rock bottom at twenty-four when he spent time behind bars. Then he met Jesus. Now the thirty-four-year-old lives happily ever after . . . right? Not exactly. *I thought I'd get better at relationships, but my own marriage ended in divorce. How could I fall back into old habits? I was supposed to be different, yet I'm moving backward. Something's gone wrong.*

Meet Tiffany. She has what so many other women desire: a loving husband, a healthy son, a fulfilling career. So why can't she sleep at night? Why does the weight of the world seem to press in on her, day after day? *I committed my heart to Jesus at age five. I practically grew up in church—I work in one today. I serve as director of children's ministries—a job I love. So why do I battle anxiety? Why am I so full of fear? Something's gone wrong.*

Meet Arnie. For many years he was a self-described hippie, beach bum, surfer, partier, social activist, cruiser. He plunged headfirst into anything that seemed to make him happy. Add excessive drug and alcohol abuse in his earlier

years, an egocentric heart, a cocky swagger . . . it was a lethal mix. Yet by the world's standards, he was a success. Doctor Arnie had carved out a comfortable life. He rubbed elbows with an academic crowd and did groundbreaking work. So why was he miserable? *As a boy, my parents taught me to respect God, but I've grown into a "spiritual loser." My life feels meaningless. Something's gone wrong.*

Meet Mike. He headed up a popular magazine for a large ministry and got to wear many hats: journalist, author, speaker, creative team leader, radio show "expert." Yet he lived in a safe Christian bubble—cut off from the real problems of the real world. Little by little, he became distracted, bored . . . actually disconnected from the God he claimed to serve. Mike's work began to swallow up his identity. *What happened to the real person inside? What happened to the man I used to be: child of God, servant of the Most High, Christ-follower? Something's gone wrong.*



Does your story sound like one or more of these? Maybe you likewise feel as if the Christian life just isn't working. Maybe you've also felt that something's gone desperately wrong.

But what if our lives could be better?

What if we could get unstuck from the things holding us down?

What if our faith could be fresh again?

What if what we need most is right in front of us?

Current research into the spiritual lives of seventy thousand Americans—of all ages, from nearly every corner of the nation—is proving something many Christians have doubted: There's power in God's Word. A majority of those we surveyed showed us that consistently engaging the Bible is *the*

key to knowing God intimately, getting unstuck, and growing spiritually.

Yes, it really works—despite what we may have been told!

The sixty-six love letters from our Creator are far from irrelevant. To the contrary, getting God's words from our head to our heart (and eventually into our feet) can result in amazing changes that transform how we think, love, live, and serve.

Just ask people like Theresa, Tiffany, Arnie, and Mike.

What have they learned about the Bible that you need to know?

How is it that a book they once viewed as a chore to read is now vital, transformational, *the* answer to their thriving lives? You'll hear and hopefully be inspired by their stories and others. (We're Arnie and Mike—you just met us above and we'll share more below.)

What you won't find are fatigued formulas and familiar guarantees that never pan out. The research we share is quantified and proven, not opinion. You'll get guidance for getting unstuck. You'll discover why it's important to begin thinking biblically, living relationally, and following Christ radically.

We'll Face the Problems

In Part One, we'll explore what goes wrong for most of us: everything from burnout and busyness to our attempts at squeezing new life out of dead things. We'll zero in on the Bible and why it's the bestseller many won't read. *What exactly is this timeless book, and how can it change our lives? If it is life-changing, why aren't we tapping in to it?* We'll round out this section with research eye-openers: A sub-study of more than eight thousand mature believers has given a startling picture of temptation's effects in our lives. Folks in this group confessed that they're beaten down by sin

and confused about what true spiritual growth really looks like—or how to experience it.

We'll Look at What Works

In Part Two, we'll dig deep into a relational way of experiencing God's Word. It's about not just reading but engaging the Bible—receiving Scripture with our minds and our hearts, reflecting on God's story, and responding to His message in a personal way. *Doing this consistently is transformational!* It helps us navigate spiritual fog, withstand temptation, and discover the answers God wants to share with us. We describe this process as getting “Powered by Four”: (1) Spending time with God (2) Getting refreshed through His Word (3) Being recharged through the Bible (4) Having a meaningful two-way connection with Him. (This will make sense later.) The goal is *relationship*. As we allow more of Jesus Christ in our lives—more of His heart, more of His story, more of what He wants for each of us—the more we learn and grow. And as truth is worked into our own hearts, we learn how to . . .

- . . . develop the right mindset so we can better live the words of Jesus*
- . . . take our eyes off ourselves and begin to love others*
- . . . pray with power and passion*
- . . . nurture our families*
- . . . live well and healthy within the community of believers*
- . . . serve the needy*
- . . . praise and worship our Creator*
- . . . become more like Jesus*
- . . . get unstuck spiritually*

We'll Chart a Plan That Works for You

In Part Three, you'll see how to apply principles of Bible engagement to your own experience. We have within our grasp a key that unlocks spiritual awakening—the answer to a thriving faith! By truly engaging the Scriptures, we can explore timeless truths, discover hope, tap into wisdom, and find our life's purpose. We'll develop an accurate view of God, learn how to “put on” the Bible's protective armor and overcome temptation—and we'll figure out how to get unstuck, again and again.

So, What Are We Getting Into Together?

Is this an anti-formula manual for spiritual growth?

Is it a detailed look at groundbreaking research?

Is it a devotion guide for individual or group studies?

It's all three. *Unstuck* is about spiritual growth and getting the life that matters most. Study these pages on your own, often referring back to them as you would with any practical reference guide. Better yet, read it with friends in whatever small group fits you best.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find three helpful features:

Research Reveals—*a significant finding from our analysis.* For left-brainers, our conclusions about why Christians stall and what helps them grow are drawn from years of research (conducted by Arnie and the Center for Bible Engagement, a division of Back to the Bible). A team of smart folks is studying the spiritual lives of thousands of Christians, ranging in age from eight to eighty. What we say in these pages is tested and trustworthy.

Encouraging Nudge—a thought-provoking nugget from our conversation. There are several principles we don't want you to miss as we navigate the process of getting spiritually unstuck. We've highlighted those nuggets in these sections, along with action points you can apply to your life.

Spiritual Stepping Stones—a suggested forty-five-day journey through the Bible. It's impossible to convey biblical truths without learning what God's Word says. That's why this book's core spiritual growth principles come straight from Scripture. We want this resource to be much more than another resource about the Bible. *Unstuck* will move you deeper into it, challenging you to consume and engage, reflect on and live out God's Word. Along with verses you can study, you'll find questions to help you ponder what you've read. Tackle them on your own or with a study group.

goTandem—a website that will help you and your church grow. In a few spots we invite you to pop over to www.unstuck.gotandem.com for clips to watch, for growth assessments, and for additional faith-building resources.

Give it a try for a taste of what you can experience in the days ahead.

Note: because the personal pronoun *I* can get a little confusing, to keep things simple we'll let you know who's talking when we use it. (For example, in chapter 1, it's Arnie. In chapter 2, it's Mike.) The collective *we* always refers to you and us . . . humans with flaws, wounds, and struggles who want to live a little more like Jesus every day.

Part One

Why We Stall Out



By the End of Part One You'll Be Able to:

- Identify the issues that most often cause Christ-followers to stall
- Recognize the destructive forces seeking to harm every believer
- Know your own hot-button spots (what keeps you from growing)
- Understand why the Bible is essential to spiritual growth
- See how to get moving toward maturity

one

Confessions of a Spiritual Loser

The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.¹

—William Arthur Ward

Bad habits, addictions, a trail of broken relationships, waking up dead inside—I don't know how many times during my decades away from faith I (Arnie) had told myself, "You are just one big mess. A big-time loser when it comes to any kind of relationship."

At least once a day.

Do you, personally, relate to this? Do you ever regret the way important parts of your own life have turned out? Ever feel stuck in the muck of your lousy choices? Worse, do you think you're going nowhere spiritually . . . does your very soul seem numb?

I felt that way for more than half my life. Yet to my surprise, in some great ways I've broken through. While I certainly

don't have a perfect walk of faith, I keep experiencing many more good days than bad. That's why I'm so passionate about what you're going to read.

Maybe you go to church (or have in the past), take part in a Bible study, volunteer occasionally, and do your best to live right. At day's end, though, much of the time, do you feel you're "in a dry and parched land where there is no water"?² Perhaps no matter how hard you try, nothing seems to move you closer to God. Could be that the more things you attempt to do that seem "Christian," the less alive you feel.

That's exactly how it was for me, anyway. For years and years I was spiritually *stuck*. Growing up, I was immersed in wise thoughts and advice about life from some wonderful people: my parents, a few well-meaning folks at church, coaches, teachers. It was, at the time, just what every child needed.

But as I hit my late teens and early twenties, I started seeing chinks in the armor of leaders—moral failures, hypocrisy. And then my own behavior started to go south as well. The more difficult my life became, the more I prayed, asking God to save me from whatever problem I had gotten myself into. Yet the more I called out, the farther away God seemed to be. And He never answered my shouts for rescue—or so it seemed to me.

Diving into humanistic psychology, I was exposed to a whole universe of ideas and actions that didn't always match up with Jesus' take on life. I was told that "god" is in every one of us, and that if we're smart enough to break away from our messed-up "religious hang-ups" we can be as free as birds. Slowly but surely I was being hand-sold anti-biblical thoughts, with the corresponding anti-biblical actions following pretty closely behind—all in the name of having "a free spirit." Sadly, twenty-seven years later, I was so confused

I couldn't recognize spiritual truth. I ended up calling bad "good" and good "bad." My theme song was Peggy Lee's "Is That All There Is?"

While it seemed fun at the time, I was a miserable spiritual loser.

In my "freedom from religion," thinking I controlled my destiny, I occasionally got the impression that maybe everything wasn't so great about this "enlightened liberty." When I was thirty, for example, I completed my massive dream house but still wasn't happy or fulfilled. Somehow I became obsessed with the notion of hanging myself from a balcony off the courtyard. Something was terribly wrong in the world I'd created for myself.

However, about fifteen years ago I launched into the process of getting unstuck . . . a process that for me happened very slowly. As I looked back at my old life, I began to see the irony of it all: My quest to be free and to become my own god was, in reality, turning me into a slave. I was in bondage to selfishness, pride, lust, depravity, and—though then I wouldn't have labeled it this way—my own twisted sin nature.

Soon I faced a new challenge: *How do I become free spiritually?*

The more I thought about my failed relationships, the more constantly overwhelmed I became. *LOSER—that's all I've ever been and ever will be.*

One truth gradually and eventually came to change everything. I realized that *I have to win today if I'm going to win the race in all of my tomorrows.*

While it sounded a bit cliché, it made sense. *I have to win today. That's all I need to focus on!* While I couldn't change yesterday (or just about anything in my past), it didn't have to define who I am and what I do *today*.

It's as simple and as hard as that.

Simple.

Hard.

Spiritual losers can get unstuck and become winners as they focus on today and connect with Jesus consistently and genuinely. Too often, even devoted Christ-followers forget we have a personal, relatable, and persistent Savior who loves us fully despite our sin and flaws.

Jesus forgets our yesterdays and reminds us not to worry about our tomorrows. Yesterday is there to be learned from, not stuck in. And the worries of tomorrow must be released to God. We can't tightly clutch tomorrow no matter how hard we try to grasp it—God owns tomorrow.

I've learned these truths the hard way. (Later I'll share more.) Dealing well with yesterday and tomorrow is crucial in getting unstuck spiritually.

From Misery to Mastery

In order to convey what a dramatic shift it was for me to trust God with my life again, let me share a bit more of my history by hitting *rewind*. . . .

Despite growing up in a Christian home, from ages twenty to forty-seven I cared more about money and pleasure than people. (Obviously, I'd left God back in Sunday school.) For nearly three decades I was spiritually lost *and* somewhat of a success by our culture's standards.

I'd achieved my doctorate and worked with people who had developmental disabilities. Through carefully developed systems, I helped them change their behaviors so they could one day leave the state-run institutions they'd been forced to call home. (Many were violent and seriously brain damaged.) Two mottos defined my work: "We can't *make* you better; we can only help you to *do* better" and "Work for pay the

American way.” To my satisfaction, the majority improved and made their way back into society. The programs I helped develop throughout California were highly in demand.

Financially, life was comfortable, and in my mid-thirties, boating became a passion. When I wasn’t working, I was on the Pacific waters; this had become my greatest spiritual high and the place I felt closest to nature. It’s where I imagined God liked to hang out.

A world-renowned surfer once said, “Never turn your back on the ocean.” Many looked up to the Hawaiian Duke Kahanamoku even more as a spiritual teacher than as an athlete. He believed “contemplation of the waters of creation stimulates extreme emotion—a warm sunset over the island of Oahu inspires peace; a massive storm surge pounding the island’s north shore demands fear and respect.”³ As a non-believer, I lived those words. But fear of the thundering seas brought me back to my senses . . . and to my God.

It was 1997. I’d just turned forty-seven, when my wife and I had to face the unthinkable: I was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. If I was lucky, I had three good years left.

We sold our businesses, bought a bigger cruising powerboat (we named her *Kindred Spirit*), and decided we’d just sail away. Char and I were at peace on, and continually awed by, the ocean. Like an old friend, the ocean was always familiar, yet always changing too. At least temporarily, we didn’t have to focus on the ugly reality staring us in the face.

Later that year I plotted a course from our home in Newport Beach to Alaska, imagining it as my last great adventure before I left this world. Char and I agreed I should take this trip alone—actually, with two male buddies. We’d take turns maneuvering the craft, giving me plenty of time to think and to reflect.

We were headed for some of the world's most dangerous and spectacular cruising grounds. Along Alaska's rugged shores, the scenery from our fifty-five-footer was jaw-dropping: jagged, snowcapped mountains descended into the Pacific, ancient spruce forests lined misty beaches, and eagles—literally dozens—shrieked and circled above us. We sailed by a glacier and watched as chunks of ice the size of houses tumbled into the bluest water we'd ever seen. One morning we were close enough to a humpback whale to hear it blow and slap the waves with its giant tail.

I remember thinking, *This sure beats sitting in a nursing home!*

But tranquility soon turned to terror.

On day seven we were around two hundred miles from the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Our routing service said we could avoid an oncoming storm if we made our way to the safety of the Inside Passage. However, instead of heading out when we were told, we cut the engine and decided to party. That nine-hour mistake nearly cost us our lives.

We heard a growl a long way off, toward the heart of the storm. It built like a crescendo, growing louder and louder. Suddenly, violent waves rolled down upon us as if we'd been tossed into a rampage.

We're not going to survive this, I thought. *Our time is up.*

I called Char and tried desperately to hide my panic. Tears rolled down my face as I told her I loved her with all my heart. I told her not to worry, even as I knew it was too late.

My heart beat wildly, pumping adrenaline throughout my body. My pulse raced and my hands trembled as I fought to head the boat into the massive seas and maintain control. Each mammoth wave felt like a hundred fire hoses exploding across the bow.

I kept my cool and, bizarrely, I nearly started to enjoy the fight of my life . . . until we got radio news that two nearby ships had experienced rogue waves—water walls twice as high as we’d already encountered; waves moving in multiple directions. I knew we were toast.

I tried using positive-thinking techniques to help keep composure, but in those moments I didn’t have any more ultimate control than any of us ever actually have. At that horrifying time, all I could do was cry out to Jesus, trust that He hadn’t given up on me, and then hold on for dear life.

You can guess what happened next. Obviously, we survived, and somehow with only a few minor bruises. The storm died down, and we steered away. The next morning, at the wheel, I prayed for the first time in ages.

Though I don’t mind the term *Christian*, admittedly it has a lot of baggage attached to it. Instead of praying to “become a Christian,” I told God I wanted to lay aside my old way of life and learn what it meant to live by His ways. I’d always admired what I’d read and heard about the life of Christ, so I called myself a Christ-follower, because this allowed me not to compare the new life I wanted with the old life I’d lived.

Char supported me every step of the way, and in the following months our whole world began to change radically. We began going to church, and we started asking, “Lord, what are you going to do with our lives now?” We earnestly sought to go wherever He might lead in the months I had left.

Little did I realize He was leading me *BACK TO THE BIBLE!* (first to the actual book, and then to the ministry that would result).

While my heart was changing, the wounds from my past didn’t heal instantly. If allowed, these injuries can defeat us

before we even get started. In addition, the shame of the damage we've done to self and to others can haunt us and, if permitted, undercut our best-laid plans to live as a new person.

Whenever my pastor would talk about certain things, I would cringe. *If people knew the real me, they'd kick me out of this place.* When my group would delve into “living a life that honors Jesus,” waves of shame would wash over me, and I'd wonder how I could ever serve God.

Here's what I finally learned: Jesus has relentless tenderness and compassion for us *just as we are*—and not despite our sins and faults but in them and through them. Brennan Manning—a fellow spiritual-loser-turned-Christ-follower—explains it this way: “God won't stop working on us until the job is complete, and God doesn't hold back His love [just] because there is evil in us. Not now, not ever.”⁴

Oh yeah . . . and my diagnosis of Alzheimer's, and the short time I was given to live? I didn't die! (Clearly, right?) All symptoms that had led up to the diagnosis had completely disappeared.

I'd been thoroughly examined by renowned medical specialists. I'm absolutely convinced this was a miracle. God still has an important assignment for me in this world.

He has one for you too. *Let's get unstuck!*

Commitment: We Give Up Formula Faith . . . and Experience a Real Relationship With God

Even though my parents did everything in their power to give me the right start in life, I still ended up miserable and disconnected from God. From high school through young adulthood I tried to follow formulas—you know, living by the “eight easy elements” or the “two true tenets” or the “four

spiritual laws.” I thought good performance guaranteed success. Was I ever *wrong!*

When all the canned processes and remedies with acronyms didn’t make a difference, and when Jesus didn’t see my efforts and just set everything right . . . and when my life flew out of control and God didn’t stop me . . . well, that’s when I figured this stuff was all some sort of cruel joke. I angrily threw out the whole idea.

I know now: *If faith is based on formulas, we’ve taken God out of the formula.*

My middle years have involved a drawn-out path to becoming spiritually unstuck, and I’ve come to realize this doesn’t happen overnight. During my own quest, I’ve observed way too many believers basing their faith on the latest self-help source instead of the Source of truth. Following the crowd instead of the Creator will always leave us empty—even dead inside.

In one sense, there are two types of Christians:

Notional Christ-followers believe in their concept of Christ; interaction is one-way only.

Relational Christ-followers have a two-way relationship with the true Christ of the Bible.

Disconnecting ourselves from Jesus, ignoring God’s Word, and getting caught up in the subculture’s perks and quirks or “club Christianity” is downright dangerous. We end up clueless about basic truths, vulnerable to false teaching, spiritually immature, and reflecting on a fantasy-based image of our Creator.

To be brutally honest, lasting growth simply doesn’t happen through books about the Bible or in “six simple steps,” despite popular promises. *And that’s good news.* Finally we can get past the guilt of not living up to other people’s

expectations. We can be free to live as God's child, free to mature and grow exactly as He intends for each of us individually.

Relationship makes all the difference. Specifically, relationship with the God of the Bible—not my notion, not your notion of God, but *the real God*: the one who loves unconditionally, who's able to heal the soul radically, who forgives completely . . . and who's made a way to move us from death to life.

Commitment: We Stop Casually Reading the Bible . . . and Start Engaging It

The Holy Scriptures. Just hearing those words, some people instantly think of pulpit-pounding preachers or upright ladies in bright floral dresses. They think of ninety-pound coffee table Bibles more for decoration than transformation. For me, it once brought to mind a scroll-full of rigid rules that seemed largely if not completely beyond my real-world-context ability to follow.

If you think this way, you're not alone.

Almost half the North American Christians I've surveyed don't read or engage the Bible daily. And that same number didn't know what it is or what it's for.

Pretty scary, as the Bible is the key to changing our hearts.

More guaranteed good news, though: Consistent connection with God's Word changes the things about us we want left in the trash can. It helps us handle struggles, resist temptation, live more peacefully and harmoniously.

There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.⁵

Supernatural, transformational, life-changing . . . there's no similar resource. Think about how it came to us! Norman Geisler notes that this alone is amazing:

First, there is the source of inspiration: God; second, the means of inspiration: men of God; third, the nature of inspiration: words from God; and finally, the result of this inspiration: the divine truth of God. No other book has been composed in this fashion.⁶

Commitment: We Eat Up God's Word Regularly . . . and Tap Into a Two-Way Conversation

To grow in grace, we need more than casual reads of Scripture. We need to feed on what God says to us. We need to digest it. Here's how Eugene Peterson explains Bible engagement:

Reading is an immense gift, but only if the words are assimilated, taken into the soul—eaten, chewed, gnawed, received in unhurried delight. Words of men and women long dead, or separated by miles and/or years, come off the page and enter our lives freshly and precisely, conveying truth and beauty and goodness, words that God's Spirit has used and uses to breathe life into our souls.⁷



Giving up religion.

Stopping the casual reads, beginning to engage God's Word instead.

Ceasing to fly through "have-to quiet times," developing a meaningful, life-altering, two-way communication with the Lord who loves us.

It is as simple and as hard as this.

I'm not going to kid you: What your heart tells you to *do* won't be easy. Lasting spiritual growth involves movement. Maybe it will mean crawling out of a pit and shaking off shame. Almost certainly it'll involve turning away from and rejecting lies you've swallowed about faith, God, and growth. It'll mean walking day by day on a path whose very ground is alive.

And at times you'll need to run. The Holy Spirit will nudge you, and it will be up to you to sprint fast and far from entanglements and into the arms of Jesus. *That* will mean admitting your flaws, frailties, frustrations . . . and you'll be safe to do this in a relationship of unconditional love and trust.

If *easy* is what you want, go ahead and trade this book for the remote.

But if you're sick of being weighed down and tripped up by the same mistakes, if you're done being paralyzed by legalism, if you can no longer stand choking on religion instead of thriving on relationship . . . if you want forward positive movement and want to truly *live* again, please, keep reading.



In chapter 2, Mike talks openly about wandering in his own spiritual desert, then looks at reasons Christians give for neglecting their faith and ignoring God's Word.



Research Reveals: It's no secret: Life, faith, and spiritual growth are often messy and unpredictable. The truth is, we don't mature and move toward God in a sequential and linear fashion. Spiritual growth moves in multiple directions (toward self and toward Christ) all at once. Accepting this is important for getting unstuck.

Encouraging Nudge: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”⁸ God’s primary means of bringing about this mind renewal—as well as disarming and destroying spiritual threats and footholds—is His Word. Only truth undoes untruth.

Take a look at unstuck.gotandem.com for more practical ways to grow spiritually. Do this every day during your forty-five-day journey.



Spiritual Stepping Stones

● DAY 1

Scripture to Remember: Revelation 21:1–4

Question to Consider: What causes me to feel hopeless at times?

● DAY 2

Scripture to Remember: 1 Peter 2:19–25

Question to Consider: If running toward God is how to grow spiritually—especially when I face seemingly insurmountable challenges—what tends to hold me back from doing this?

● DAY 3

Scripture to Remember: 2 Timothy 3:10–17

Question to Consider: In my heart of hearts, do I trust God’s Word? Do I trust its Author? (Why, or why not?)