



The Language of Kindness:
A Nurse's Story
Christie Watson

- Chatto & Windus, 2018, £9.65, 336pp, ISBN: 9781784741976
- Reviewed by **Steve Fouch**, Head of Communications at CMF

Sometimes I forget what a huge privilege it was to be a nurse. Sitting with the dying, being there at the birth of a new life, helping people navigate through mental illness, disability and rehabilitation.

Then you read something like *The Language of Kindness*, and you get jolted out of the everyday and into the reality of what it means to be a part of this amazing profession.

Watson takes us through her story; stumbling into nursing almost by chance, discovering the reality of human suffering going on all around us, but hidden from most people's gaze. She takes us through all her training placements, her first staff jobs and on to her long-term career as a PICU nurse.

Littered with facts, figures and details to explain to the lay reader what is going on, the book explores the minutiae of life in the A&E, the dark sense of humour of the staff room, and the exhaustion of completing a third twelve-hour shift in a row. It lays bare the smells, the mess, the pain and despair, as well as the hope, joy, relief and the stories of human kindness in the midst of suffering with which each day confronts nurses.

This is not a Christian book – although Watson picks up on some biblical texts, especially around the issue of human dignity. You won't agree with all she says, but it moved me profoundly, reminding me of all that I loved (and hated) about being a nurse.



Dying Well
John Wyatt

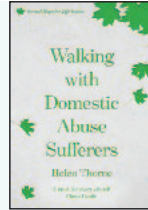
- IVP, 2018, £9.99, 192pp, ISBN: 9781783594856
- Reviewed by **Steve Fouch**, Head of Communications at CMF

Increasingly hidden from public view, medicalised and privatised, death and the process of dying have been progressively removed from ordinary life. The health professions and the church have colluded with this according to the premise of this book. John Wyatt argues that this has been to our detriment, as dying can be a time of growth, healing and reconciliation and that in marginalising death we have lost so much.

Digging back into Scripture, to the ancient church tradition of *ars moriendi* and his own clinical experience, Wyatt's book is a much needed antidote to the

modern marginalisation of this universal human experience. In actively engaging with impending death, we can deepen our faith, help others come to terms with our departure, and find fresh spiritual depth in our living.

Full of hope, practical advice, biblical depth and personal testimony, *Dying Well* is going to be indispensable to pastors, chaplains, medics, nurses and others involved in the care of the dying. But above all, it is something that every Christian needs to read and engage with as we look to our own future hope in Christ, and to coming to terms with our own mortality.



Walking with Domestic Abuse Sufferers
Helen Thorne

- Inter-Varsity Press, 2018, £7.99, 112pp, ISBN: 9781783595952
- Reviewed by **Claire Wilson** psychiatry trainee and MRC Clinical Research Fellow, King's College London

Taking readers through the journey of the domestic violence victim, from disclosure to recovery, this short book is written for those who may find them themselves supporting survivors of domestic abuse. It also discusses how to support perpetrators.

We will likely come in to contact with patients affected by domestic violence throughout our careers. Indeed, as a psychiatrist, my patients with mental disorders are disproportionately affected both in terms of victimisation and perpetration.

What should be our response

as Christians? Thorne offers practical advice on how we can walk alongside all those affected. She helps the reader make sense of domestic violence within a biblical framework of suffering. She outlines the warning signs and ways in which victims may present, as well as some of the thought processes of victims and perpetrators. She then offers insights in to how to effectively support disclosure, escape from the abusive relationship and know ultimate healing. This is an essential read for all Christian health professionals.



Psychiatric Medication & Spirituality
An unforeseen relationship
Lynne Vanderpot

- Jessica Kingsley publishers, 2017, £14.43, 240pp, ISBN: 9781785921261
- Reviewed by **Stefan Gleeson**, Consultant Psychiatrist & Director of Medical Education in Hampshire

This book has received some positive reviews in the USA, where the pharmaceutical industry holds some sway over medical practice, raising questions of professional practice. Based on a qualitative study of 20 patients with mental disorders, identifying themselves as, 'religious/ spiritual'. It is essentially a critique of the reductionist care of patients. There is a useful emphasis on narrative construction by patient and doctor; reflections on how medication impact on patients' spiritual development and disturbing examples of unacceptable practice.

If, as the author suggests, it is true that the majority of the American population is on some form of psychotropic medication, then the book is a timely warning against the pharma

industry dictating what goes on in the consulting room. The training and practice of psychiatry in the UK is more predicated on Karl Jasper's emphasis on 'listening' to the patient and the bio-psycho-social (& spiritual) systems formulation than the author suggests.

Vanderpot states that she does not wish to make generalisations from such a small sample of patients. She seeks to present negative and positive narratives of patients' medication journeys, taken from a spiritual angle. However, I would guard against generalisations as she has not included the most acutely unwell in their social context, and just as not every doctor is correct, neither is every patient always correct in their interpretation. Still a useful, albeit disconcerting, read.

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Mad or God?

Jesus, the healthiest mind of all
Pablo Martinez & Andrew Sims

- IVP, 2018, £6.89, 208pp, ISBN: 9781783596058
- Reviewed by **Peter May**, a retired GP and author of *The Search for God*

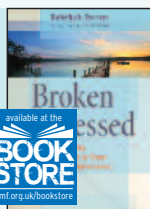
This is an important and original book. Two psychiatrists have worked together to examine Christ's mental health. Taking their cue from CS Lewis' trilemma that Jesus was either mad, bad or God, they investigate Christ's life and behaviour with professional expertise.

Did this Man of Sorrows show signs of depression? Did his mood and character fluctuate? Is there any evidence that he was deluded? Ruling out major pathology, they then look for personality disorders, relationship difficulties and reactions under stress.

What did his teaching reveal of his intelligence and sanity?

Was his life consistent? Did he practice what he preached? Was he volatile or unbalanced? Did he form good friendships? What did his conversations reveal? What impact did he have on others? Did he have any moral flaws? How should we rate his moral teaching? How did he relate to women? How did he cope with misfits, enemies, authorities, the weak and the scheming? And what was he like under pressure, facing false charges, torture and an agonising death?

Jesus actually presents us with a quadrilemma, for many believe he was really a myth. But this compelling figure was far beyond fictional imagination: he had the healthiest mind of all.



Broken but blessed

Journeying from pain to peace with unlikely guides
Rebekah Domer

- Plough Publishing, 2018, £10.56, 138pp, ISBN: 9780874867633
- Reviewed by **Janet Goodall**, retired consultant paediatrician based in Stoke-on-Trent

This little book contains the spiritual equivalent of clouds holding silver linings. The author is a hospice chaplain who structures her book around the eight beatitudes (Matthew 5: 1-12). Disabled herself, she enters into the sufferings of others in a sensitive way, concluding that suffering is intended to transform us by bringing us closer to Christ. It is Jesus's love that enriches the poor in spirit, comforts those who mourn, honours the humble and satisfies the spiritually hungry and thirsty. Those so blessed by his love will show mercy, approach God with purified hearts and convey his peace to others. Even those reviled and persecuted for their faith will be

enabled to rejoice in the hope of a heavenly welcome ahead.

The 'unlikely guides' of this book range from a joyful sister with complicated Down's syndrome, through to those grieving over various kinds of dashed expectations, to a street pastor ministering to those hungry for healing and discovering the meaning of mercy. Each beatitude is appropriately illustrated by someone Domer has met. All of us are likely to suffer in some way; even if dented rather than broken we are still in need of healing. These stories encourage us to look for blessings around the bruises. Jesus provides the supreme example as he endured the cross for the joy set before him.



Pregnancy and Abortion

Your Choice
Dr Mark Houghton

- Malcolm Down publishing, 2018, £7.00, 208pp, ISBN: 9781910786802
- Reviewed by **Greg Gardner**, a GP in Smethwick

Attempting to be both easy to read and scholarly, this book succeeds in both objectives.

Written in an easily accessible style and with short chapters, the first part of the book explores the way choices are made. Sections on parenting, adoption, abortion, teenage pregnancy, and 'men and abortion' fill in some of the detail.

Six chapters later, various long-term sequelae of abortion are presented. The ones on long-term maternal mortality, and mental health have helpful charts. There is a good review of abortion and the risk of subsequent preterm birth by John Wyatt. The book is well referenced. The author set himself a huge task by trying to cover as

much medical ground as possible. There are 238 references in total with many primary sources.

The dedication page is 'to all pregnant women and their near relations.' The book would be good to recommend to pregnant women faced with difficult choices as well as pregnancy counsellors, GPs, obstetricians and trainees for those specialties, church leaders, researchers, journalists and politicians. It would be a helpful addition to any church or medical library.

If the material in this book is kept updated it could become a primary source of information for anyone trying to get deeper into this big subject.