

## Praise for *Hurt Healer*:

“Through the pages of his life story Tony Nolan challenges and encourages us to reach out fearlessly and let the hurting see God in us. *Hurt Healer* compassionately and practically gives you the goods to pull it off right now!” —TobyMac, recording artist; author, *City on Our Knees*

“Tony masterfully uses the ancient parable of the Good Samaritan and his own modern day life story to prove that God was, and still is, the ultimate hurt healer. Part exposition, part memoir, part devotional, and all worth reading.” —David Nasser, author, *Jumping through Fires*

“The church is in desperate need of the truths that Tony has so beautifully shared in the pages of *Hurt Healer*. With each chapter I began to get more and more excited about the journey that God has me on to love those around me, and yet at the same time so convicted about my own love walk. Tony has an amazing gift in being able to take Bible stories we have heard countless times and make them come alive. This book helps us to freely give as we’ve so freely received.” —Alyssa Barlow, BarlowGirl

“Tony Nolan is one of my greatest friends. He loves Jesus with a passion like no one else I know. He loves his family as Christ loves the church. And he wakes up in the morning with a lost world on his heart. You will see his heart for Jesus and people as you read *Hurt Healer*. And you will be challenged to reach the world one person at a time!” —Mark Hall, Casting Crowns

“Tony Nolan shares with us his own personal, painful experiences and reveals to us the Healer, Jesus Christ, who knows no limits in healing those hurts. Tony challenges us to share this Healer with those who don’t know him, and he confronts us with the fact that the Healer expects us to be his soothing salve.” —Sonny Perdue, governor, State of Georgia

“Tony understands the way in and the way out of hurt. Trust what he says, take his advice, and let him lead you into a life of hope in Christ.” —Brandon Heath, recording artist

“Tony Nolan truly has an ear for what God is saying to young people in this generation. Through this book, *Hurt Healer*, I believe God will empower Tony’s voice to impact many others through the life saving message of Jesus Christ. You will appreciate Tony’s authenticity as he shares from his personal experiences. And you will enjoy his story-

telling ability as he retells biblical narratives in a fresh and engaging way.” —Chip Rogers, majority leader, Georgia Senate

### **Praise for Tony Nolan:**

“We were the first guys to use Tony Nolan and we knew everybody else would want him. He is humble, animated, outta control and speaks from his heart in twenty-seven flavors. He has a message, and people love to hear it from him.” —Lanny Donoho, Big Cheese of Catalyst Conferences; founder of Big Stuf Student Camps

“Tony Nolan is a one-of-a-kind speaker and minister whose heart is for the lost. He has a way of relating to hurting people that is honest, heartfelt, and real. I’m so grateful to know him and his family personally and to have watched him deliver the gospel night after night with the same enthusiasm on several tours. Read this book!” —Francesca Battistelli, recording artist

“Tony Nolan is one of the most gifted gospel communicators I have heard in a long time. He is direct, clear, humorous, and effective!” —Ronnie Floyd, lead pastor, The Church at Pinnacle Hills

“Tony Nolan and his family were awesome to partner with in ministry! Tony’s passion and zeal to be open and real with people is a breath of fresh air today. No ‘going through the motions’; no sugarcoated gospel about giving only ‘part’ of your life to Jesus; and best of all, no apologies! Just straight up radical Christianity.” —John Cooper, Skillet

“Tony is a great communicator and a great encourager to all those he is around. He’s a blessing and a faith builder to all he speaks to.” —Robby Shaffer, MercyMe

“It has been an honor and privilege to get to know and work with Tony Nolan. The love of Jesus truly reflects through his life. In the last three consecutive years we invited Tony to speak at our Christian Family Day at the Ballpark and we saw an amazing harvest for God’s glory!” —Albert and Deidre Pujols, The Pujols Foundation

“Tony has been with us two times and we had a great harvest of souls. He has an amazing gift of preaching the gospel and ‘drawing the net.’ When Tony Nolan preaches the gospel, the altar will be filled with people of all ages coming to Christ.” —Dr. Fred Lowery, pastor of First Bossier and Host of First Word

# HURT HEALER

*reaching out to a broken world*

TONY NOLAN



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# Contents

Foreword by Johnny Hunt	9
Acknowledgments	11

## Part 1: Knowing Jesus

1. Know Show	15
2. More than a Story	20
3. Feeling Their Pain	27
4. Called Out	34
5. God's Skin	41
6. Hurt Healer	48
7. Pausing for Compassion	54
8. Proving We Care	60
9. Paying the Cost	65
10. What If?	71
11. Focus!	77
12. Jesus Paused	83

13. Jesus Proved 90

14. Jesus Paid 97

## Part 2: Showing Jesus

15. Do Likewise 107

16. Divine Deeds 114

17. Forever Somewhere 121

18. What Do I Do with That? 128

19. Step Over 135

20. Pass On 142

21. Pass Out 149

22. Wine of Forgiveness 155

23. Oil of Love 162

24. Give Back Good 169

25. Thumbs-Up! 176

26. Divine Props 184

27. Picking Locked Hearts 191

28. Rewards 198

29. Think about It 205

30. Christianity Rocks! 212

Notes 220

## Foreword

Tony Nolan takes us back not only a few years to his own personal healing, but over 2,000 years to show us how this healing was made possible. After being abandoned by his natural parents, being abused by his adoptive father, and becoming a skeptic, to say the least, Tony found real healing. If anyone understands the culture and its attitude in the twenty-first century, it is one who has been there and done that. Tony offers hope to a generation of desperately hopeless people.

Tony is an enthusiastic guy, and his enthusiasm has been generated by the God who embraced him and radically changed his life. His story is both convincing and enlightening. It will prompt readers to look within and wonder, *Could this possibly happen in my life as well?*

If there was ever a generation or a time in history when people were in need of hope, it is now. This book has the potential to touch a generation not only in America but literally all over the world as we consider that the deepest need, the deepest hurt, and the deepest wounds can only be healed in

the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tony gives credit where credit is due, and that is in intimacy with Christ.

This generation is waiting for us to show and tell. They are waiting for us to show through emulation what we have proclaimed in our exhortation. They want to know there is someone who genuinely cares and will listen and attempt to understand their personal struggles. Who better understands than one who has been there and knows the misery, hurt, and disappointment that can come from placing our faith in human beings only to realize later that the Creator who made each of us is the one who cares most deeply and understands more correctly how to meet our deepest needs.

I know of no one in this generation who has the platform to speak into the lives of teenagers and young adults with more power and effectiveness than evangelist Tony Nolan. Time and time again I have personally seen God use him to bring radical life change to those with whom he has had the privilege of speaking.

Read this book, pass it on, and watch the hurts be healed through the Healer, God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Johnny Hunt  
Pastor, First Baptist Church  
Woodstock, Georgia

P A R T 1

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# KNOWING JESUS

# 1

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## Know Show

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

2 Corinthians 2:15

Christianity sucks!

How could I say such a thing? Well, I didn't. They did. Who are they?

They are not believers in Jesus. They are obviously put out with the church. They are young, middle-aged, and senior citizens. They have toddlers, toupees, and tattoos. They dance when no one is looking. They drool at the sight and smell of dessert. They nervously chew their fingernails as Ryan Seacrest pauses to reveal the next American Idol. They shed tears at funerals, weddings, and graduations. They feel strongly about issues like abortion, homosexuality, and injustice. They are very human. And what I know about them compels me to make sure we never forget that they exist.

They are the reason I am writing this book, and according to God, they matter . . . a lot!

And because they matter, we must reach out to them.

I want you to know that I was and in a lot of ways still am one of them. I am an unapologetic believer and follower of Jesus Christ. But I haven't always been a believer, nor did I grow up in church. So I get where they're coming from; I understand the negative ideas they have about Christianity. Most of these thoughts about Christians are false, and they faded from my own mind after my conversion. Other beliefs, however, have proven shamefully true.

If they had a MySpace or Facebook profile it would contain a disturbing detail: "turned off to all things Christian." It's hard to conceive people would be bent like that, but they really are. In the book *unChristian*, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons indicate that only 3 percent of young people in America have a favorable impression of Jesus as portrayed in the lives of evangelicals. You may not be surprised by this data; neither was I. But what I learned next stunned me. Get this: a high percentage of them said that they had been exposed to Christianity, meaning they had some kind of encounter with something or someone Christian.<sup>1</sup> They visited a church, worked with a Christian, or sat next to a Christian in an English composition class. The point is that they heard or saw something that claimed to be Christian, and their impression about Christianity after the encounter was not very good. If you are a Christian, this data should make you concerned.

These numbers reveal that a spiritual pandemic has infected the church, resulting in a viral decline in church attendance. Consider the statistics provided by Dr. Dan Garland, director of pastoral ministry and church consulting for LifeWay Church. I recently sat in a conference with several hundred other leaders and cringed when he said, "In 1950 over 80 percent of our public school kids went to a Christian church, and now it is down to 4 percent." When I heard this, my heart sank. How can this be? When I was growing up, a few of my

friends and family members and I didn't think too highly of Christianity, but I didn't realize that so many people had no interest in God. I didn't realize we are now on the cusp of having a Christless generation in America.

Well, I don't put much faith in statistics. I prefer to touch and feel the evidence of such claims. So I conducted my own little research project. In the last four years I have visited over 153 cities, speaking to well over a million people. Unfortunately, as I have traveled throughout America, I have seen that this negative mindset about Christians really does exist and goes beyond generational lines. Approximately eight out of ten nonreligious people I talked to said Christianity sucks. Some used the term *sucks*, others said it is dead, several claimed it is irrelevant, and many used words that would make even Bill Maher blush.

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***We are now on the  
cusp of having a  
Christless generation  
in America.***

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How can this be? How can so many people be turned off to this amazing, loving, gracious God that we know? The cause of this great dilemma points to a breakdown between the God that we know and the God that we show. And breakdowns can happen in the most innocent of circumstances.

I heard a story about the parents of a troubled teenager. They desperately needed to connect with their daughter, so they decided to have breakfast with her every morning. The idea was to use that time to connect with her before she connected with the harmful things of the world. Every morning they prepared a simple breakfast of eggs, juice, toast, and jelly. But the piece of toast they gave their daughter was the heel—the hard end of the loaf. This went on for a week until one morning the teenager in disgust picked up the piece of toast, slung it across the room where it stuck to a wall, and screamed, “Is this the extent of your love for me—heel toast? What have I done that makes you hate me so much?”

Dazed, the parents replied, “Honey, we're sorry. The heel of the loaf is our favorite piece.”

Do you see it? What happened in that story illustrates our current dilemma in helping people understand Jesus. Innocently enough, we go to church and live our lives loving Jesus. We know how good he is, but it's not getting across to non-Christians. They have tossed

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***Will we take a good look at our attempts to connect with non-Christians and make some deep life changes for the sake of reaching out to a broken world?***

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back what we have been serving them through our religious lives, screaming their distaste. Will we chalk up their cries as mere outbursts of misbehavior, or will we pause a moment, take a good look at our attempts to connect with them, and make some deep life changes for the sake of reaching out to a broken world?

Remember, I was one of them. I haven't forgotten what it feels like to be broken, enslaved, and hopeless. I have

done my share of toast slinging. But a group of believers heard my cry and cared enough to engage me. I am going to unwrap my story throughout this book with high hopes that you will experience a life-changing encounter with God so supernatural that after a non-Christian dines on your version of Jesus, they will be able to declare with the psalmist, "I have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, blessed are those that trust in God!" (see Ps. 34:8).

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## D E L V E

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Who are the people that you know who may have an unfavorable impression of Jesus?

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Briefly describe a moment when you had a conversation with someone who had a bad taste in his or her mouth about Christianity.

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In this chapter the question is asked: Will we chalk up their cries as mere outbursts of misbehavior, or will we pause a moment, take a good look at our attempts to connect with them, and make some deep life changes for the sake of reaching out to a broken world? Briefly write down your response to that question.

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*Dear God, hearing that there are many people who are turned off to you, help my ears to hear your heart beat for them as I take this journey through the rest of this book. Amen.*