

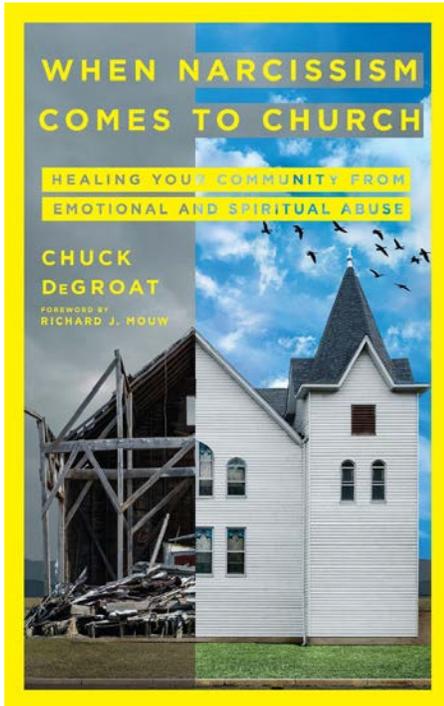


PastorCare  
West Michigan  
Helping Pastors Soar

March 2020

# When Narcissism Comes To Church

I am thankful for the honor of joining Chuck DeGroat's Launch Team for his new book. I have a personal interest in Chuck's work because I had the privilege of serving as his pastor while he was growing up on Long Island, NY. Today, Chuck is the Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI, where I graduated in May 1979. It is a wonderful blessing for me to continue learning from Chuck through his powerful and timely new book.



**New Book Release Date:  
March 17, 2020**

**Order Your Copy Today!**

Chuck sent this message to the Book Launch Team on Saturday March 14.

I'll admit, given everything going on in the world, a book launch is an afterthought. But amidst the time we'll have for reflection and self-care in this season, I want to challenge you to use this season to grow in health + wholeness. My book is a contribution to this, I hope. In it, I explore the Enneagram through the lens of this psychological disorder. I explore spiritual abuse, emotional abuse, and gaslighting. And I pave a path toward healing, for you, and for the church.

## SELF-CARE in a Season of Anxiety

I want to encourage you to take *really good care of yourself* during this anxious time.

That might mean:

- beginning/ending your day in contemplative prayer and/or meditation, with additional pockets of time through the day to breathe.
- taking in national news in small doses.
- limiting your social media scrolling.
- avoiding trauma bonding (anxious conversation which scapegoats and reacts) and fostering real and healthy conversations where you share clear feelings, needs, and requests.
- getting a good night's sleep, which may mean giving up things that create obstacles to good sleep, like alcohol or late night binge watching.
- Turning off notifications on your phone, and turning on do not disturb in the evening to reduce stimulus.



I scheduled an appointment with Chuck DeGroat at Western Seminary in the summer of 2019. I was working with a group of church elders and pastors as a church consultant. I wanted to pick Chuck's brain and learn from his experience with narcissism in the church. He told me about the new book he had written on narcissism. He said this was the most difficult book he has ever written. He said he didn't want to write this book, but so many people continued to tell him he had to.

When Narcissism Comes To Church, is the fifth book on narcissism I have read in less than twelve months. In the providence of God, He saved the best book for last.

If you are a fan of the Enneagram, this book is a must read! Chuck puts flesh on the bones of theory, offering insightful profiles of nine faces of narcissism.

*To my knowledge, no one has made a clear connection between the Enneagram and personality disorders before. However, having worked with and taught the Enneagram for more than fifteen years, I think the connections I make are worthwhile and helpful additions to conversations on both narcissism and the Enneagram. With each type, I try not to present a merely toxic form of narcissism but hope that the reader can discern the fine line between the gift of healthy narcissism can be and the bite it can inflict when toxic. I invite you to read these descriptions slowly and deliberately, not with an eye toward a quick means to pigeonhole another person, but with a humility that recognizes that each of us, regardless of whether we're on the narcissistic spectrum or not, is both beautiful and broken, complex and unique.*

Chuck's book is refreshing because he writes from a place of hope, not cynicism. Chuck is able and willing to do this extraordinarily difficult and time consuming work with narcissists because he is a glutton for redemption stories. There is something in him that refuses to give up on any human being.

*I cannot live from this place of depth and union unless I'm willing to see myself clearly, to see the narcissist who lurks within me. Having worked with diagnosably narcissistic women and men for twenty years, I'm more mindful of my own profoundly self-protective strategies. I realize that while I may not spike on the narcissistic spectrum on a psychological test, I am not immune to grandiosity, exploitation, manipulation, absence of empathy, and evasion of my true self, anchored in God-union. I've come to realize that I cannot help them until I see myself clearly, until I move with compassion to wounded, weary, and wary parts of me that seem to live more loudly than my true self.*

In one of his stories of counseling a narcissistic pastor, Chuck invited him to take the risk of asking a tough question to his staff and to his wife: *How do you experience me?* Their honest answers were revealing and painful—but it created the opportunity to understand the deep work he needed to do. My personal big take away is to sit down with my colleagues and family members, one-one-one, and ask them to honestly answer that same question: *How do you experience me?* I want to hear their honest, truthful answers—even if it is painful and surprising. Thank you Chuck for humbly showing me the way.



**Thank you for your prayers and financial support!**

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**Let's stand together on the truth, hope, comfort, assurance, and peace of Psalm 91!**