



Weird: Because Normal Isn't Working

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Normal people are stressed, overwhelmed, and exhausted. Many of their relationships are, at best, strained and, in most cases, just surviving. Even though we live in one of the most prosperous places on earth, normal is still living paycheck to paycheck and never getting ahead. In our oversexed world, lust, premarital sex, guilt, and shame are far more common than purity, virginity, and a healthy married sex life. And when it comes to God, the majority believe in him, but the teachings of scripture rarely make it into their everyday lives. Simply put, normal isn't working. Groeschel's WEIRD views will help you break free from the norm to lead a radically abnormal (and endlessly more fulfilling) life."

Weird: Because Normal Isn't Working Details

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David says

Nothing like a friend asking to borrow a book to get me to finally actually read it. My pastor Craig wrote this book earlier this year to accompany a sermon series of the same name that had one of my favorite weeks of the last couple of years (Week 2, Weird is Better). When I've seen the messages, I tend to take the book for granted. I'm glad I finally pulled this off the shelf.

The voice is totally Craig's. His message: If you want to be like normal people, think and act the way normal people act. Looking at what is the norm in our culture and the world around me, I'll take "weird" every time (Frustrated side note: You'll hear folks talk about The U.S. being a "Christian Nation." If this is true, something has gone very wrong with Christianity.) The book's focus is to be different in the way you handle: 1) your time, 2) your money, 3) your relationships, 4) sex, and 5) your values.

A good read for any Christian who wants something different than the norm, especially young Christians.

Kaitlin says

Weird: Because Normal Isn't Working by Craig Groeschel was a really interesting read for me. It challenged me to think about what's "normal" in today's society and how going against what's normal in many cases is what the bible encourages all of us to do. For example, it's normal to have a large amount of debt, to spend all our time working or running to and from events, appointments and various other commitments and even getting divorced from our spouse when things get tough. This book got me to think more about the way that I am living my life now and the things that I need to do to align myself more to what God wants - what most likely will make me seem Weird to everyone else.

Really good read that I would recommend other Christians checking out.

Kevin says

I can't think of a good way to express it that comes out the way I really mean it. The best I can do is that Craig Groeschel's Weird...isn't all that weird. Craig Groeschel's Weird is what I suspect the vast majority of people would call normal. Groeschel's Weird is...have a savings account. Don't be a buffoon when traffic is bad. The only chapter where he can really claim to be swimming upstream, culturally, is the chapter on premarital sex.

And I don't disagree with any of this. Nor am I saying things should be really freaky. Saying that now is a time to be counter-cultural is not saying that every possible counter to the culture is good. It's more that there is more to Christian virtue than what gets covered in a middle school civics course.

Also, wow is it hard to get past the fact that I don't like the author. I don't mean I know Craig Groeschel and/or know some scandalous bit of gossip about him. I don't, and I don't. What I mean is, the book is very

much about how he has lived his life, and I just really don't like the guy.

He seems like the sort of guy that goes to university on an football scholarship and gets his degree in marketing. And yeah, I looked at his bio, and my point isn't no good person gets a sports scholarship and chooses marketing for his degree, or that people that follow that life are bad people. I am not saying it is wrong to enjoy sports, to be good at sports, or wrong to study marketing. But it's not the sort of person I identify with, so if the book hinges greatly on "identify with my life", it falls flat for anyone who doesn't identify. Also, when I say the words "brand-name clothes, football scholarship, marketing degree, megachurch," I bet the first concept that comes to your mind is not "counter-cultural."

Zach Henry says

The book *Weird*, by Craig Groeschel, is an amazing recourse to have to help you during tough times in your Christian walk. It focuses on five main points; time, money, relationships, sex, and values. It gives you insight on how to keep your life "weird" in these areas. The "Time" section talks about how we always need to use our time to serve the Lord, and not wait until later. "There is no time like the present." The "Money" section discusses about how having money doesn't make you happy. You need to be generous with what you have been blessed with and serve the Lord with it. In the "Relationship" section, Groeschel talks about how we need to only be with other Christians. We shouldn't be with non-Christians, hoping that they will change someday, even though it is very evident that they won't. The "Sex" section states very clearly that sex is intended only for marriage, not for anything else. We as a nation need to get that through our heads. The final section, "Values," discusses having a divine burden that bothers you so much that you have to take action and do something about it. It forces us to do God's work.

I really did enjoy the book, *Weird*. I read it with my youth pastor in a book study group, and that helped tremendously. It was very down to earth, and it gave me many moments in life that I can personally relate to. It also helped inspire me to think outside the box as to how I can be "Weird" in my walk with God. I personally would recommend this book to any Christian, especially an adult Christian who is in a committed relationship or marriage. More of this book speaks directly to you than anyone else. It is still a good read for younger Christians though. As Groeschel states in the book, "Normal isn't working."

Don Current says

Outstanding book. A great look at how Christians should stand out from the crowd in different areas of our lives. Very engaging and thought provoking. He brings it to a very firm conclusion that leaves no doubt about where we should stand. Well done!

Van Tilburg says

Pastor Groeschel's argument is that Christians should be different from unbelievers, and that compared to them, (the normal people), we should appear "weird". He offers advice for how to get areas of our life to be more Christ-like.

James says

I was wandering under a bridge by the river and found these words scratched into the concrete above a few empty bottles of MD 20/20:

The true arc of world history over the 3rd millennium will be a radical obliteration of all class, ethnic, national, racial and gender divides under the banner of the one true Church. The people will rise as the one true body of Christ and crush the forces of Satan under their heel. Capitalism will wither away and a new age will dawn on the earth.

Why can't Craig Groeschel acknowledge this simple, obvious, God-given fact? Perhaps because when the angels sound their seven trumpets, he and his supremely privileged whitebread, two-faced, prosperity-preaching ilk will be first against the wall...

Ingrid says

Craig has great concepts but has little follow through in thoroughly explaining how scripture in context relates to issues he presents. The topic is too narrow and forced into every chapter. It seemed that the word and concept of "weird" failed to be more than a filler word built up by a scarce attempt to bring depth through self gratifying stories. This book falls short and highlights how popular pastors can get away with very little scholarship. Hard read.

Linore says

Pastor Groeschel shares many of his sermons in this book, dovetailing around the theme of being weird for Christ, since "normal isn't working." Each chapter takes on an aspect of life that, if lived normally, results often in failure, stagnation, and lack of joy and satisfaction in the Lord. He is amusing, anecdotal, and makes good points. There's a lot of take away here, and, like a Sunday sermon, we tend to forget what we've heard unless we take special care to remember. I'll probably be re-reading this one, at least in part, and checking the pages for little arrows I wrote in at places I need to study again. Some of the chapters are stronger than others, but overall Groeschel has me convinced that I'm not nearly weird enough. (Are you?)

Shannon says

A great overview of what a Christian life should look like compared to what mainstream American culture might consider Christian.

Jeanie says

The book started with a question that the author asked himself and challenged his readers to ask the same. Which road are you on, the narrow or the wide. If you are on the wide, you are pretty normal. Your life is normal, your life is no different than most, however, if you are on the narrow, you are pretty weird and people will notice. The book had 5 parts that help you identify what path you are on. Time, money, relationships, sex and values. I really enjoyed this book. It did not shy away from the hard stuff and was true to the word as to how our hearts can be changed. Our hearts are changed when the focus is on God and not our selves. He challenges you to face the truth about yourself and who God is. It is not enough to acknowledge. I also was intrigued about his comment on sin. Sexual sin that it is a sin that is more damaging to our relationship with God and with others. He gives a very good biblical response to that gives you hope and a reason. There is reason for our hope and I thought this book gave reasons that will resonate with anyone. It has humor, but not at the expense of who God is but of who we are. This was a very fast and delightful read. I am thrilled to read more of his books.

Kat High says

Groeschel makes the argument that in order to truly live the Christian life you must forfeit living a "normal" life. I agree with that and found bits of the book inspiring. But, overall, I thought the narrative voice was mediocre and most of the content was underwhelming. Moreover, the author has a blatantly upper-middleclass worldview and a tendency to judge others (and at times he makes judgements about others in the same paragraph that he claims to be nonjudgemental.) There was also a gross "superiority" vibe that came from the narration ("*Normal* people have affairs! It's so much better to be *weird* like us and prioritize our marriage!!") that made it seem like he doesn't really have a strong interpersonal understanding of the world he just makes judgements against society at large. Like he looked around and said, "Hey, it looks like there are a lot of overworked people in the world. That must be because they're greedy people with bad priorities" without ever making an attempt to understand where people are coming from. All of this together made the text pretty alienating. (Plus he refers to homosexuality as a "depraved" behavior. I'm sorry but there's just no way I could give a text that called homosexuals "depraved" any semi-decent rating.)

Hope Miller says

this was a pretty good book. It covers a wide range of topics all related to the subject of what it means to live as a true Christian. there are five categories with three chapters in each category. my favorite one was definitely the first one, time. I would recommend this book.

Jennifer says

This author came across as judgmental and privileged. Two of my least favorite things. While Christians do have to do "weird" things like pray often, be reverent, and seek him it doesn't mean we exclude, pass judgment, or overlook the basics like love and kindness. Maybe this was a huge turnoff because I watched a video along with it and heard the author spew hate towards non christians and LGBTQ. Most definitely the last thing I'll read by this guy.

James says

Because 'wide is the road that leads to destruction...', Groeschel posits those on the narrow road must be the weird ones and he proceeds to give advice on how we may become weirder. Only problem is it is not that weird. This book aims at being counter-cultural but it has nothing of the prophetic political oomph of, say "The Upside Down Kingdom" by Donald Kraybill. Maybe that is just being picky and an unfair evoking of an Anabaptist, but I just think this book lacks an edge.

Example: Groeschel begins his book by discussing time. He, being weird, says that rather than trying to do everything you need to prioritize the things that are really important, live lives that are fully in the moment, and establish a rhythm of working and rest (Sabbath). All good advice mind you. But is it weird? I would expect and see all of the same advice in a variety of self-help and business books. No revolutionary weirdness here.

Groeschel goes on to talk about money. After all it is so normal for people to amass big debt and be miserly. Groeschel's 'weird' advice is this: Don't spend money you don't have, live within your means and be content, and be generous. Clearly, most people don't do this at the level which he is advocating, but does that make it weird? You might as well say that professional athletes are weird because most people just watch. In fact, most people respect people who are generous and manage money well. It is not something 'weird' that people look askance upon, but something praiseworthy. Case in point, most people respect that Bill Gates started a foundation giving away gazillions of dollars (conservative estimate) even if they bemoan Windows based operating systems. People like when people do good things with their money, it isn't weird. Just rare.

Perhaps where he comes closest to weirdness (against cultural values) is in his discussion of Love and relationships and sex. Our culture is increasingly (or seemingly?) sexually permissive. Against this Groeschel holds to traditional Christian standards, no adultery, no pornography, no lust, no friends-with-benefits. All good stuff and maybe weird to some people. But again I think weird is the wrong word. People definitely respect those who remain faithful in marriage and relationships and try to raise good children. Elite may be good word if it didn't have so many elitist connotations. One wonders why he didn't call this book Holy. That is the biblical word for set apart and special and could aptly be applied to most of the material. Of course you know the reason is well as I do. People don't buy books on holiness because it isn't sexy. It is better to name a book something like 'weird' because there is a gimmick which appeals to our deviant nature.

In the last section, Groeschel addresses 'values.' By this he means contra- our culture cultivating a relationship with God where our hearts break for the things that break His heart. He also talks about allowing God to change the parts of our hearts that are setting up obstacles in relationship with Him. Again, all well and good, but why call this section values. Why not commitment? Values is such a wet dog word.

Okay so this is the only Groeschel book I have read and based on some of the reviews it sounds like I read the wrong one if I am to give him a fair shake. Actually he comes across as likeable and has some great things to say. He says somethings very well. On the critical side, beside the central image of this book being inappropriate and misapplied, I found this book too individualistic. It is really a Christianized self-help book (albeit with some great content). This isn't necessarily bad, we need to address the individual. But if you are going to write a book about the counter-cultural weirdness of Christianity at least include a section on how the church is a beacon of hope against systemic injustice. The weirdness of the gospel is not that people who believe it are moral and have good character. The weirdness of the gospel is that Christ and his Kingdom calls every other kingdom into question (even America). Add that, and maybe this book would have something weird to say. As it is, it is simply a better version of a number of other books I've read.

