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REAL TALK

CREATING SPACE FOR HEARTS TO CHANGE

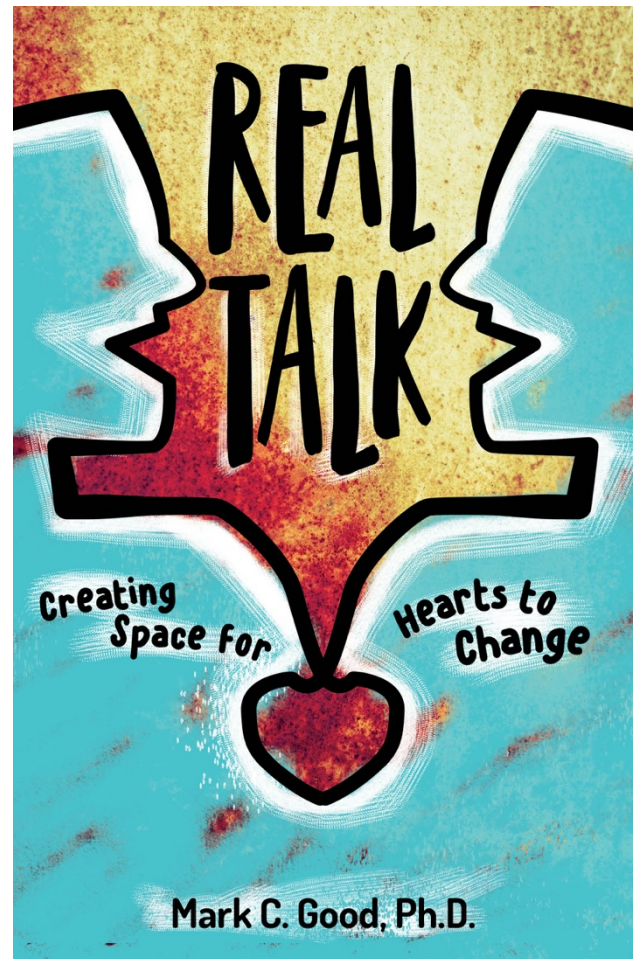
MARK C. GOOD, PHD

Healing conversations touch our brokenness and suffering. They are *real*. When they happen we know it immediately, and we are grateful.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus joined two hurting men on their path, walked with them, and asked questions. He revealed things to them about himself and them—both through the Scriptures and through the way he walked and talked with them. By the end of the conversation, their hearts were on fire.

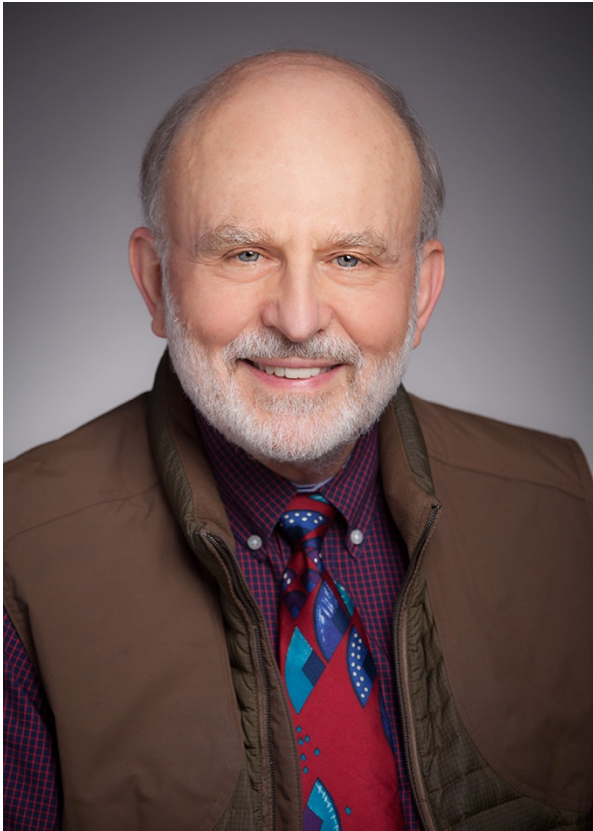
In *Real Talk*, Mark Good shares valuable tools he has used successfully for decades in counseling individuals and families—skills that help us slow down, come alongside others, and communicate in meaningful ways. Using *Real Talk's* four perspectives and three skills equips us to help people settle, articulate what is happening inside them, and face some of the broken ways they are living. Many have found that *Real Talk* builds caring relationships, where hearts get mended and personal growth happens. It enables others to make better decisions, discover new ways to include Jesus in their lives, and deepen their enjoyment of people and life.

Clinicians and lay counselors are using Dr. Good's *Real Talk* as part of biblically grounded therapy. It's also for parents, pastors, teachers, and anyone who desires to have constructive heart-to-heart conversations and love others well.



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Deep River
B O O K S



About the Author

MARK C. GOOD, PHD

Mark Good (BA, Mathematics, Cornell University; MA, Religion and Counseling, Covenant Theological Seminary; PhD, Social Work, University of Maryland) is a board-certified diplomate in clinical social work. He has worked with couples, families, and individuals in the Annapolis community since 1978 in private practice. He has taught at Chesapeake Theological Seminary and University of Maryland, and presented four professional

papers at the first and second International Congress on Christian Counseling as well as one AACC World Conference.

Through CornerStone Institute, which he co-founded, Mark leads workshops and retreats for lay-counseling skills and marriage enrichment, and he has made a number of radio and television appearances. He has served on the board of trustees for Covenant College and several advisory committees.

Mark and his wife, Susan, have three married children and nine grandchildren, one of whom died at birth. They love biking and leading marriage workshops where couples practice *Real Talk*. Some of Mark's favorite sayings are: "The person is more important than the problem;" "Everyone walks through life a little differently;" and "Maybe you're right!"

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What Others Are Saying About Real Talk

Mark has shown me the value of using conversation to create space in which the Spirit of God can work. . . . [This] book is a great way to discover Mark's potent set of word pictures. Learn from this book and you may find yourself more fully enjoying people—and being there to watch Jesus heal.

— **Glenn Parkinson, DMin**, Senior Pastor, Severna Park Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Maryland; Author of *Tapestry: The Book of Revelation*

*Real Talk talks to you! Dr. Mark Good brilliantly combines spiritual truths with our natural desire to have real talks. **He provides the code to walk with God as we walk with others.** His book systematically presents a skill set to nurture real, life-changing and heart-transforming conversations. This is your chance to learn how to have talks that are real.*

— **John (Jack) H. Wagoner, MD, PhD, MBA**, Board Certified Psychiatrist and Clinical Psychologist

*Mark's insights changed the way I do ministry. The very first time I applied what I learned from Mark, a normal after-church-service-coffee-hour conversation went from superficial to deep and soul-searching, resulting in shared tears of relief. . . . I have no doubt that **your own conversations can become more redemptive and healing by gleaning from Mark's years of experience and biblical reflection on this topic.***

— **Mickey Sanchez**, Associate Chaplain, Northwestern University; InterVarsity Christian Fellowship: Graduate & Faculty Ministries

***There is not a day that goes by where I do not use the skills outlined in this book.** . . . Dr. Good has outlined tools that get to the heart of a person that helps move us all toward the ultimate Lover of hearts.*

— **Mike Rallo**, Spiritual Life Director, Helping Up Mission, Baltimore

*Dr. Good takes the basic principles of psychotherapy, all of which are immersed in the deeper truth of God's redemptive narrative of salvation, and casts them in biblical language and thought. . . . **To anyone interested in being a lay counselor, or implementing a lay counseling program in a church, I highly recommend Real Talk as a sound fountain of wisdom, psychologically, emotionally, and biblically.***

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— **William T. Kirwan, DMin, PhD**, Clinical Psychologist, Author of *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling*

*As Christians, we deeply desire to relate to people in authentic, healing ways. . . . **Mark has done a masterful job writing a guide about what real conversation is, and how to intentionally and regularly engage in it as a way of life.** . . . I wholeheartedly recommend this as a valuable tool for churches trying to find effective ways to care for non-Christians and Christians alike.*

— **Miriam Engler, MA, LMSW, EMDR Specialist**, Grand Rapids, MI

The world is too complicated, life too short, and people too precious to waste opportunities for real talk. This book helps us to pull ourselves out of the relational pitfalls we so easily fall into. To freely explore, discuss, and review conversations—the way we were built to relate to people—helps develop relationships that are solid and delightful.

— **Jayne M. George**, Coordinator of Family and Children Ministries, Christ Church, Berkeley, CA

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Suggested Interview Questions

For Mark C. Good, PhD, Author of

Real Talk

Creating Space for Hearts to Change

Q: Is this book primarily for counselors and others in various ministries? Or would you recommend it to someone who simply wants better conversations with friends or family members?

A: If you want to have a heart-to-heart conversation, if you want to know what to do when you get stuck in a conversation, if you are willing to face your friend's brokenness and suffering and want to be helpful, and if you want to enjoy the person you are with, then this book is for you. I wrote *Real Talk* for parents, married couples, pastors and teachers, anyone who wants to talk a bit more deeply and help others grow personally and spiritually. *Real Talk* makes conversations real.

And of course, I believe *Real Talk* will be valuable for lay counselors, clinicians and counseling programs, because it offers practical skills and an integrated counseling model.

Q: How did you come up with your approach to talking with people that really invites their hearts to change?

A: Two things. One summer long ago I was working at a group home for 14-year-old boys in trouble with the law. One day things got difficult—the boys were winning. I was challenged to take the afternoon off and come back the next morning prepared to enjoy them. I did! Over the years I have learned how to enjoy each person God brings into my life. Indeed, the person is more important than the problem. Besides, if I'm not enjoying you, I cannot help you grow.

Two, over the past 40 years, walking alongside many people through difficult and painful times in their lives as a clinical social worker, the concept of heart pictures coalesced in my mind. (I use *pictures* to refer to our perceptions of people, God, and how things work in our world.) Because heart pictures guide our responses,

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life flows when our pictures are accurate and we stumble when our pictures are inaccurate. My work, then, is to create space for inaccurate pictures to become more accurate. This happens as we cultivate inaccurate pictures and set the stage for God to revise or replace them. Changing pictures changes people.

Q: How do you hope reading your book will impact your readers' lives and conversations?

A: My prayer is for readers to gain a different perspective on people, especially ones they are close to. A perspective that leads to more gracious conversations, deeper understanding, and greater appreciation of God working in people's lives. And that by using the skills readers might enjoy others more and mature spiritually themselves.

Q: You've talked about "heart pictures" today and in your book. What do you mean by this?

A: Stop and think a moment. When I have an experience, especially an intense one, the experience leaves an imprint on my heart. Imprints are memories plus the feeling we had at the time. (I use *heart* to refer to the core of our being, where our thoughts, emotions, and behavior originate.) We gather different memories together to form opinions and conclusions about who you are, who I am, who God is, and how things are supposed to work in our world. We call these ABCs, which is a technical term, affect-belief-claims. Then, when an event happens outside of myself, like somebody smiles at me, or when something happens inside me, like feeling afraid, my ABCs filter and interpret that event.

For example, and this is a positive example, I have always believed that my wife is a great mom. That's one of my ABCs. One day I was sitting across from her and I saw her push our two-year-old son off a couch onto the floor. In a court of law, this is my testimony. My heart grabbed what my eyes saw and immediately discounted it because of my picture, my wife is a good mom! I thought whatever happened, she did not push him onto the floor. I didn't even bring it up. My wife never knew. To this day, I do not know what happened and she doesn't remember.

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This is a positive, accurate ABC. All of us have inaccurate ABCs. Whether positive or negative, inaccurate ABCs cause us to stumble in our conversations and in living our lives. For example, one man I knew saw his wife as a sergeant. When she said something that *could be* interpreted this way, his ABC *would* filter it that way and he would hear her being his sergeant all over again. If this were accurate, then he would want to keep it. It wasn't and got replaced by a more accurate heart picture of her. Then their life flowed. They lived more in touch with reality and closer with God.

Q: Briefly, how does someone do *Real Talk*?

A: First, we focus on the person by asking explore questions. Second, we walk right alongside the person by asking discuss questions and creating space for him or her to think and ponder. Third, we cultivate heart pictures for him or her to see things more accurately and discover the next step to take in the situation. Fourth, we review how things have unfolded to tie together the person's story and God's story.

Q: How could one relationship—or perhaps a whole family, small group, church, or other community—be impacted by practicing your model for conversations?

A: We have a nonprofit organization, CornerStone Institute, which seeks to equip churches, lay counseling ministries, and para-church organizations with the skills to build up the body of Christ. In churches people are giving advice to each other all the time. *Real Talk* makes these interactions more helpful. When people can be real with each other, like many experience in AA communities, for example, we coalesce and enjoy supportive community. Then we grow personally. Curt Thompson has said that the solution to personal shame is vulnerability. *Real Talk* takes us into authenticity and vulnerability.

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