



# **Compelled: A Memoir of OCD, Anxiety, Depression, Bi-Polar Disorder, and Faith...Sometimes**

*Tim Blue*

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This is a book for anyone who has battled a mental illness - any mental illness - or for anyone who loves someone with a mental illness. It is also a book for anyone who has struggled to understand the role of faith in his/her suffering. Blue recounts a 35-year battle with the daily despair of OCD. For the first 25 years, his Christian upbringing convinced him he had a faith issue, not a chemical one. At age 25, after realizing there was more going on than a simple lack of faith, he spent the next 10 years struggling to find the right diagnosis, doctor, and treatment plan. This journey landed him in 7 different psychiatrists offices, countless psychologists offices, and even in the mental hospital for three days. In the end, Blue finds some answers but also comes to grips with the presence of his questions. This book will engage you, encourage you, and make you think about the sometimes toxic blend between spirituality and mental illness. Excerpt from chapter 3: At its core, OCD is a quest for certainty where certainty doesn't/can't exist. The person who washes his hands a million times wants certainty that the deadly germs are banished from his hands, but he can never be sure. The driver who fears she has accidentally hit a pedestrian re-drives the same route over and over, looking for absolute certainty that she didn't hit the innocent pedestrian, but there's no way to be absolutely certain that that odd color on the sidewalk isn't the blood of the child she just ran over who is now at the hospital or the morgue. Or the kid who is terrified he'll be abandoned by his parents...he can never ask enough questions or stand in just the right spot to check on their early arrival so as to be completely certain that they will always come back. Uncertainty dooms the sufferer of OCD to his torture chamber. For the religious person, uncertainty will, at some point, attack his quest for peace through faith. Let's face it: religion comes with plenty of uncertainty. Sooner or later, everyone on the quest to understand or know God will have to ask some difficult questions: Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? Why does God allow so much suffering when he could simply zap the evil-doers? What does it mean to be saved? Unsaved? Is there such a thing as hell, and if so, how do I know that the sweet little old lady who used to live next door who wasn't very religious but who was the kindest person I ever knew isn't there? (See appendix for a fuller discussion of hell). My inevitable questions about the black-and-white certainties of the Christian faith caused the struggle between my internal self and my external self to rage on. Spiritual questions plagued my brain from the time I was old enough to ponder such matters, but the stakes were high in my family, where failure to see things the Right Way was not acceptable. My family's certainty mixed with my inevitable lack of certainty created a struggle within me between intellectual honesty and family acceptance - a struggle that persists to this day. One of the certainties of my upbringing that troubled my uncertain brain was the question of hell. To make matters worse, in my early childhood, we were Southern Baptists to the core - no drinking, church on Sunday and Wednesday (and sometimes Sunday night just in case!), suits to church so Jesus could admire our wardrobes, etc. Dogmatic Christian groups are guilty of excessive certainty about countless uncertain things, like how long it took the world to be created, where the precise line is between those who are "saved" and "unsaved," and that hell is a real place where anyone who hasn't "accepted Jesus as his/her savior" is going. Middle-school-Southern-Baptist-Tim, who had outgrown his fear of being left by his parents, needed some new way to be petrified of abandonment and isolation. Eternal damnation seemed like just the right thing for my brain to grab ahold of.

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