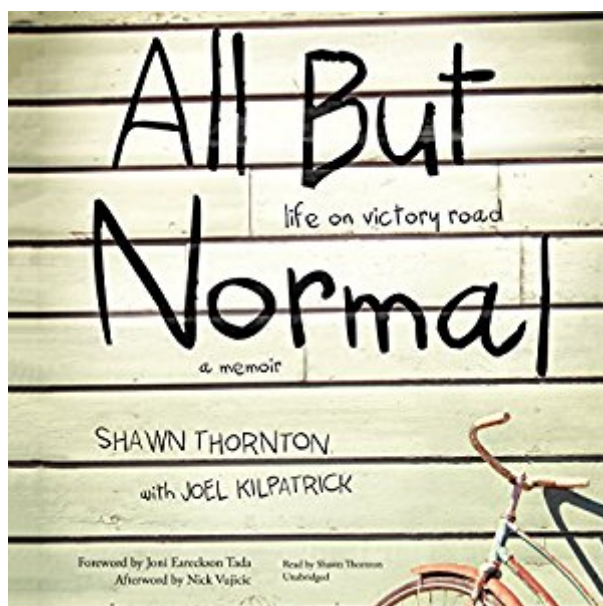


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All But Normal: Life On Victory Road: A Memoir



Synopsis

Growing up, Shawn Thornton's life was anything but normal - but then, so was his mother. After waking from a coma following a car crash, Beverly Thornton's once sweet and gentle disposition had been replaced by violent mood swings, profanity-laced tirades, and uncontrollable fits of rage. Inside the Thornton house, floors and countertops were piled high with dirty laundry and garbage because Bev was unable to move well enough to clean. Dinners were a Russian roulette of half-cooked meat, spoiled milk, and foods well past their expiration dates. A moment of frustration might prompt her to hurl a knife at Shawn; his brother, Troy; or their dad or to vehemently cuss them out, only to shower them with love and affection moments later, as though nothing had happened. And God help the family cat! On several occasions Bev even tried to jump out of the car on the highway while Shawn and his brother struggled to keep her inside. Yet this same woman was also a devoted Bible reader, Sunday school teacher, and friend to the elderly, poor, and marginalized wherever she went. How the same woman could be a saint one minute and a nightmare the next was a constant source of frustration for the family. Then one day, after decades of embarrassing outbursts, a surprise discovery finally helped the Thornton family come to grips with Bev's mysterious condition and bring Shawn to a startling realization that changed the course of his life forever. A heartwarming coming-of-age story, *All but Normal* is a powerful reminder that sometimes the "broken" people in our lives are the ones who need fixing the least.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read Pastor Shawn's story literally in one sitting! The book's captivating writing style shines a bright light on God's redemptive work in the world each of us lives in that's all but normal. God's used Pastor Shawn's teaching to bless my life from being a junior high student in his youth group all the way through sitting under his teachings as a young professional. "All But Normal" paints the mosaic of Pastor Shawn's heart--a heart full of love and compassion that overflows into his ministries. God opened my eyes and led me to examine my heart about how I view others and myself by reading this memoir. The last line of page 139 (paperback version) is seared into my heart and mind: "She [Beverly Thornton, Pastor Shawn's mother] dwelled in the margins with the overlooked, the ignored." Jesus calls us as Christians to the same. Am I dwelling in the margins? Are you? I am thankful to have the opportunity to learn of such God-fearing saints written in a God-honoring way. I sense God will use "All But Normal" for good in the lives of all who read it!

Incredible story! Sometimes we think that we are all alone; the only ones that experience difficulties in life. We look at others and mistakenly believe that their lives are normal and we have been forsaken by God. Shawn's story is an excellent illustration of how God uses the hardships and trials of life to nurture in us hearts that can be used by God to minister to others who are experiencing difficulties. If you think your life is anything but normal, read this book and be encouraged that God can make something beautiful out of your life too!

All But Normal was waiting on my porch when I arrived home Wednesday evening, and I finished it at 12:15 Friday morning--and would have done so earlier if it hadn't been for needing to sleep and go to work. Can't say that I've done that with a book for ages. And rarely has a book had me simultaneously in fits of laughter and tears. It is an amazing story of how God can use us, in spite of our brokenness, for His glory. At 14, Beverly Thornton prayed, "Lord, use me..." Though her life path was radically altered after a car accident, God answered those prayers. He used her to reach her father, the young man whom she eventually married, and countless others who were naturally drawn to her (not to mention her two sons who have both been called to pastor and lead others). As a memoir, the book describes the "all but normal" childhood the author endured--one that no one would have chosen. However, instead of bitterness, there is only love. It is a love that transcends--one that could only have come from God. Despite the tragedy, no matter what horrific things played out daily in their lives, God's grace sustained. Nuggets of wisdom are found in even the most unexpected places, often spoken by the most unsuspecting people. On my list of favorite books. A must-read (but keep the Kleenex handy).

All But Normal is truly an amazing story of God working in a child at a very early age through extremely difficult times. I read the book and had very mixed emotions. I might have a somewhat biased view of the book because a few of the events shared in the book are some of what I witnessed personally and much of the book are events I was never aware of. Shawn's mother Beverly and my wife are sisters. My wife and I knew of the physical difficulties Beverly had and certainly saw on occasion her temper and frustration reveal itself. We also saw a very faithful follower of Christ and a woman that served Him well. Many of the events detailed in the book were shocking and heartbreaking to read. Heartbreaking because much of this was all happening right under our family's nose and we were not even aware. I have so much respect and appreciation for Shawn and his brother Troy. To see them both today as men of God and ministering the way they do is truly remarkable. I think this book will give so many others hope. God can work in all of our lives, even when life is very difficult.

As a Licensed Professional Counselor and pastor, I often come into contact with hurting people whose childhood pain continues to plague them. This remarkable book underscores how God's mighty grace and steadfast love penetrated the brokenness that the author's family experienced. I highly recommend this memoir. Dr. Bill Tanzey

I finished this book this morning. It took me two sessions. The first night I was reading in bed and had to stop at 1:00am due to early morning commitments. It's been a long time since I've read a book I just couldn't put down. Even though it is written in the first person story telling fashion versus being a devotional, it is full of advice and life learnings from which we all can learn. I know as I currently face some challenges in life I will think of this book often and know that God truly does have a plan for each of us!

You won't be able to put this book down until you have read every last word! This is one book you need to buy and read! Shawn does a great job describing life with his mother who, as the result of an accident, was "All but normal." You read how she served others less fortunate than herself, yet "blew up" without notice at the simplest of things...cursing and saying the meanest things. What he lived through and what his father and brother endured is amazing...an example of God's grace. The book will make you laugh, cry and rejoice. I can't recommend it enough. Dwight Lehman

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