

Zealous Love: A Practical Guide to Social Justice

By Mike and Danae Yankoski, Zondervan, 256 pp., \$16.99

Reviewed by Kelly Givens, FASTEN staff

Zealous Love truly lives up to its subtitle—I’ve yet to read a book on social justice as practical as this. Easy to read, beautifully designed and skillfully arranged, Mike and Danae Yankoski’s *Zealous Love* is a great introduction to eight of the most pressing issues in our world (Human Trafficking, Unclean Water, Refugees, Hunger, Education, Environment, HIV/AIDS, and Inequality) and what we can do *right now* about them.

In the Foreword, Eugene Peterson (Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College) describes the people who share their stories in *Zealous Love* as prophetic voices. This is true. You cannot read this book without coming to a better knowledge and understanding of the crises inundating our planet. These forty “prophets” share the injustices they have witnessed and the work they have been drawn to as a result. Their sobering stories aren’t meant to induce guilt; rather, to inspire and invite readers to “participate in a way of life that brings us into a deeper humanity.” Mike and Danae invite us to discover how God wants us to use our education, time, skills, connections, and wealth for His glory and for the good of those suffering from global crises.

Each chapter of *Zealous Love* follows the same format to inform and engage readers. First comes a “Briefing,” where the Yankoskis share their personal experiences as well as broad facts about the particular topic. For example, we learn through that around 1.2 million children are trafficked each year and that 1.1 billion people don’t have reliable access to safe drinking water. We learn more than 923 million people around the world are hungry, and that nearly 1/3 of all children in developing countries are underweight. We learn care for the environment *is* a social justice issue, because of the more than a quarter million of people affected by climate-related disasters between 2000-2004, 98% of them were in developing countries. We face the agonizing statistic that every hour, nearly 230 people die because of AIDS. While the cost of medication for HIV has decreased dramatically, we find out that because 2.6 billion people live on less than \$2 a day, even reasonable cost for medications is still nearly impossible to afford.

If *Zealous Love* was filled with nothing but these statistics, it would be an incredibly depressing book. Thankfully, we aren’t left with just a list of problems. Following the “Briefings,” the Yankoskis show us solutions through the “Field Notes” section of the chapters. These are the hope-inspiring stories of men and women working to change these heartbreaking statistics. Attorney Sean Litton shares the “watershed moment” of his life: working with *International Justice Mission* to rescue “Elizabeth” from a brothel. Paul Rawlins, a pastor at Sisters Community Church in Oregon, tells us about his work to bring water to the Karamojong tribe in Uganda, and how that process helped to build a bridge of peace between the Karamojong and neighboring Sabinu tribe. Reverend David Beckman, President of *Bread for the World*, describes how his organization is working with lawmakers to draft policies that will redirect money to end hunger at home and abroad. Naomi Zacharias tells us the story of Eva, a former South African prostitute who

was given the chance to go to culinary school and is now a respected leader in her community.

These stories are designed to inspire and challenge. The authors hope that their book will move readers to action on at least one particular issue. To prompt such personal response, each chapter concludes with a “Now What?” section. Here the Yankoskis provide reflection questions and recommendations of practical ways to immediately respond. For example, they challenge us to put ourselves in the shoes of the hungry by fasting. They enjoin readers to donate food to local food pantries, advocate legislation for those suffering with AIDS, and assist with funding antiviral treatments. *Zealous Love* also provides contact information for organizations readers can get involved in, like *World Relief*, the *Polaris Project*, and *Blood: Water Mission*. If there were a battle cry or motto for *Zealous Love*, perhaps it could be taken from a quote U2 front man, Bono, once said: “I just hope that when the day is all done, I’ve been able to tear a little corner off of the darkness.”

The book would lend itself well to a high school or college student group study—it is accessible and many of the suggested action steps are doable for young people. As it is an introduction to social justice issues, it will likely not be deep enough for readers ready for a “301” type course. For the less initiated, it is a wonderfully engaging start.