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Barefoot Church: Serving The Least In A Consumer Culture (Exponential Series)



Synopsis

People are hungry to make a difference, yet most don't know where to start. In fact, 'serving the least' is often one of the most neglected mandates of Jesus. Barefoot Church shows readers how today's church can be a catalyst for individual, collective, and social renewal in any context. Whether pastors or laypeople, readers will discover practical ideas that end up being as much about the Gospel and personal transformation as they are about serving the poor. Here they will see how the organizational structure of the church can be created or redesigned for mission in any context. Drawing from his own journey, Brandon Hatmaker proves to readers that serving the least is not a trendy act of benevolence but a lifestyle of authentic community and spiritual transformation. As Hatmaker writes, 'My hope is that God would open our eyes more and more to the needs of our community. And that we would see it as the church's responsibility to lead the charge.'

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was not sure what to expect when I began to read Brandon Hatmaker's book. It was his first book, it was my first time really becoming acquainted with him, and also the first time I read some of the kinds of material/information/thoughts that are in a book like this. Brandon doesn't hold back on what he believes should be at the core of the modern day New Testament church - serving the neglected. He lays out his belief through honest, written conviction and verses and stories straight out of scripture. I mean honestly, how can you argue with that? :) I've been on a journey as of late

redefining what scripture claims that "discipleship" really is. I was pleased and excited to see that Brandon touched on this - which only helped me think more on the subject. On page 109 he wrote, "The problem with our current forms of discipleship is not necessarily found in what we do well; its found in what we've neglected." I found that to be strikingly insightful because we, as a church culture, usually try and fix what we are already doing. We spend hours upon hours searching for a solution to something that might not even be a problem. Instead, it might behoove us to try and figure out what we may be lacking. If the only thing that I read in the whole book was the first sentence on page 127, it still would have been worth it for me. The sentence is very short, but reads as follows: "It is risky to be different in the church." Many of us out there have have felt that prompting. We have wanted to step out, risk something, challenge the system, and just plain ask "Why?" However, we often fear what the response will be.

Brandon Hatmaker in Barefoot Church shares his church's values and his experience in serving an urban community. Hatmaker stays in the radical middle between the "missional" and "attributional" constructs of church. He is not attempting to promote one or the other, but simultaneously both. He makes it clear that he views evangelism as distinct, though not separate from social action. In his church, Hatmaker created a structural necessity of community service by expecting all of his church's small groups to spend half of their time serving together. He claims that if small groups focus on community rather than mission they may get neither. However if a small group focuses on mission it will likely get both community and mission. This is the best insight of the book in my opinion. Barefoot Church also is highly decentralized. Hatmaker regards community service that is organized primarily by church staff as non-sustainable. The more people mature in Christ the less they should need motivation and structure provided by someone else. For Hatmaker, community service is much more than helping the needy or obeying the instructions of Christ. Service is a way to help the church get into the community so that the community doesn't withdrawal from the church. Unbelievers are far more likely to join together with a church service project than a worship service. I disagreed with Hatmaker in at least two ways: One disagreement is with his statement that in order for a church to reach a community, it needs to be attractive to all of the community. While I get the desire to be sensitive to the whole community, it is rare that a church can be a good fit for every population segment.

I would suspect if I give a copy of Barefoot Church to a non-christian friend, with their perceptions of what Jesus taught and how many Christians actually live, after reading it they would say, "Yeah,

that's what Christians should be like if they actually lived out what Jesus taught."This is one of those books where I constantly found myself nodding in agreement constantly as I read. Several, "oh, that's good", or "yeah, exactly", or "that's awesome" where either internally said or actually vocalized as I rolled through the book. This is the first book I read to completion on my Kindle touch and I really like being able to go back and see my notes and highlights. Several quotes from Brandon jump out, like, "I wondered if I would have to leave occupational ministry in order to commit fully to serve those in physical need." and "Sometimes I would like to ask God why He allows poverty, suffering, and injustice when He could do something about it. But, I'm afraid He would ask me the same question."I'm in church leadership, after having been "dechurched" for several years, and this book echos what many lay leaders, pastors, church-goers, indifferent Christians, and even non-christians think about what Jesus taught, in relation to caring for the community, and the appearing contradictions many American churches and many Christians actually live out. Like going after the \$8,000,000 building with reclining seats, a gym, a coffee shop, and book store that will sit empty 5.5 days a week instead of being a more biblical steward of the resources God has provided and serving the homeless community around the corner. This isn't a "social gospel" book that encourages Christians to serve people without also letting them know about the truth of the gospel.

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