



A Reader's Guide

Before Reading:

Reading this book may challenge your faith and hope. If the initial chapters feel emotionally daunting, we encourage you not to give up. There is great value in taking a closer look at the epidemic of violence against the poor, particularly in places from which we might be geographically or psychologically removed.

This book is going to take you on a trip. It might not be an easy journey but we hope you'll agree that the destination is worth any hardships along the way. As you read the individual stories of injustice you may become overwhelmed by anger, indignation or compassion fatigue. We encourage you to read the book in small chunks. Do stop, pray, and talk to God about the impact the information is having on you. Remember that 'greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world' (1 John 4:4). Ask God to guide you through the material and to show you what part you might play in the solution.

We believe that it is important to look at this evil and to bring it into the light so that we can be part of bringing hope in partnership with God to these seemingly hopeless situations. There are places in the world where God is bringing hope to these victims and we want to tell you about that as well.

Jesus himself was often 'filled with compassion' upon seeing the suffering of others. Pray that God might unite your compassion with His for the poor throughout the world who suffer violent injustice.

*"This I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail."
Lamentations 3:21-22*



Questions

Chapter 1:

1. Does violence seem to be a part of your community? Where is it visible? Where is it hidden?
2. What emotions are you feeling as you read the stories in this chapter? How do you think God feels as God sees this going on around the world? How does the idea that every human being bears God's image relate to these injustices?
3. Are there questions arising from this chapter that you would like to ask God? See Habakkuk 1:2-4.
4. "From La Unión, to Bangalore, to Nairobi, this is the most deeply hidden layer of what it means to be poor: the dark humiliation and debasement of being assaulted and hurt by other people."¹ How does this reality connect with Jesus' second greatest commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself"?

Chapter 2:

1. "Violence in the developing world is like grief in the developed world—it's everywhere, but we just don't see it."² Have you had an experience of grief or loss in your life when you felt your suffering was 'hidden' from the community around you? How might your experience relate to the experience of these victims of hidden violence?
2. This violence is often at the hands of stronger neighbors harming weaker ones. Does the Bible speak about this type of injustice?
3. Before you read this chapter, how familiar were you with the concept that slavery still exists today? Where does God speak in Scripture to the importance of a worker being paid for their work? See also Jeremiah 22:13.

Chapter 3:

1. Does the problem of the physical vulnerability of the poor around the world have any bearing on the church's biblical mandate to spread the gospel throughout the world?

¹ Pg. 33

² Pg. 43



THE LOCUST EFFECT

2. The psychological wounds of trauma are devastating to the victim and are difficult to see from the outside. What role might the church play in bringing healing to victims of violent crimes?

Chapters 4-8:

1. How effective is the criminal justice system in your community? Is the 'pipeline' of justice in your town succeeding or failing?
2. Have you personally ever experienced violent crime or feared for your own personal security in your community?
3. What does the Bible say about the importance of the role of a judge in executing justice? See 2 Chronicles 19:5-7.

Chapters 9-10:

1. What is the relationship God desires the rich to have with the poor, particularly in areas of justice? See Proverbs 22.
2. How do you think these broken systems of justice impact the churches in these countries?
3. Given that committed community members have played a critical role in social reform movements in the past, how might the church 'flip on the lights' to the reality of violent injustice? What is God saying to you about your personal role in this?

Chapter 11-Conclusion:

1. Is prayer powerful enough to 'shift the center of gravity' in the world's thinking about this issue? Could praying and fasting for judges, police and attorneys around the world make a difference?
2. What do you think Jesus would do when faced with these situations? Pray? Fight? Heal? Teach? If we are Jesus' hands and feet in the world today, given the circumstances outlined in this book, how might we best represent him?
3. How might God be calling you to participate in 'changing the conversation' about global poverty today?