

2012

The Humanitarian Leader in Each of Us: 7 Choices that Shape a Socially Responsible Life [review] / LaFasto, Frank and Carl Larson

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Recommended Citation

Freed, Shirley (2012) "The Humanitarian Leader in Each of Us: 7 Choices that Shape a Socially Responsible Life [review] / LaFasto, Frank and Carl Larson," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 6: No. 2, 133-134.

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shame from our lives. It is true that unwarranted shame is a harmful emotion. This is revealed in situations where one unjustly experiences shame caused by an abusive relationship, whether physical or emotional. As a result, many have lived lives filled with events that have led them to think shamefully of themselves, even though the guilt lies with others.

In Brown's attempt to reach her goal of helping the reader discover how vulnerability can be a courageous act, she does not acknowledge the Christian view of innate sinfulness. Consequently, she neglects the Christian solution to shame—to accept Christ and the sacrifice He made on the cross. While this doesn't make us any less shameful, it allows Christ's shamelessness to be judged in substitution for our own shame. In turn, we are free to be vulnerable for Him.

I agree with Brown that vulnerability is truly courageous. Leaders especially need to embrace vulnerability. But with Brown's main focus on shame as the reason we resist vulnerability, she tends to neglect many of the other factors that cause leaders to disregard the "daring greatly" value of vulnerability. These factors, which many leaders struggle with, can include greed, arrogance, pride, hate and fear. The Christian view, which Brown does not address, demonstrates that Christ provides the way to deal with legitimate and illegitimate shame. He is also the way in which leaders may address these other factors affecting vulnerability.

In addition to presenting a self-focused solution for our problems, Brown weakens her book by using a great deal of foul language. This reliance on curses to intensify her points makes for a very awkward and uncomfortable read.

Though devoid of the Christian perspective, there are many truths

detailed throughout the book, including great suggestions for how to have a positive and healthy way of life. I would recommend this book to those seeking a better understanding of how the secular mind deals with shame and takes steps toward a courageous lifestyle. But I would not recommend this book for those seeking a holistic and Christ-centered journey to vulnerability.

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THE HUMANITARIAN LEADER IN EACH OF US: 7 CHOICES THAT SHAPE A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE LIFE

*By Frank LaFasto & Carl Larson
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (2012)
Paperback, 191 pages*

Reviewed by SHIRLEY FREED

The thesis of this book is that humanitarian leaders develop a commitment to help others in need by following a path through seven choice points. These opportunities to choose are presented in a linear fashion beginning with "leveraging life's experiences" and ending with "persevering" and "leading the way."

The authors identified the development process by interviewing 31 individuals who had in some way taken charge of helping people in need. The humanitarian leaders varied in age, gender, ethnicity, religious background and socio-economic status. The negative forces they had taken action to ameliorate included exploitation of children, limited access to water, unavailable health

care, inequalities in education, homelessness, children at risk, and natural disasters.

Driven by a sense of fairness (or lack thereof), each of the 31 interviewees came to believe they could make a difference—that they had something to offer. And when the opportunity came, they had the positive mindset and self-awareness needed to take action. They all started small and then persevered until they were recognized as leaders.

All of the 31 leaders are introduced at the beginning of the book. Their stories unfold throughout the book as the authors describe each of the seven steps or choice points. Exemplars are chosen from the 31 narratives to develop the chapter devoted to one step. For example, the chapter on fairness features seven of the leaders. Inderjit Khurana, a teacher, recognized that the children “outside” of the school gate deserved an education as much as those “inside,” which led her to take school to the “railway children” in the form of “bags of magic” that carried basics like pencils, crayons and soap. Ryan was only six years old when he became aware that many people in the world have to walk 10,000 steps to get clean water, while he only had to walk 10 steps to the water fountain. Dr. Winchester, a surgeon, took action to provide surgical supplies and knowledge to Russian doctors who didn’t have access to the same instruments he had. Sanphasit was among the first to notice the incredible unfairness of children who are abducted and sold into prostitution. Finally, though they recognized that “life is not fair,” Kirpatrick, Samuelson and Kielburger each took action to help children in need of health care and education. These seven (of 31) narratives make the chapter/choice point about fair-

ness clear. The other six choice points are treated in a similar fashion.

There is one question I would ask the authors: did all 31 individuals completely pass through each of the seven choice points in a linear fashion? It isn’t obvious from reading the book. It seems as though most of the individuals exemplify one or more of the steps, but not necessarily all of them, and possibly not in a linear fashion.

The authors target undergraduates as the audience for the book. They hope this age group will develop as humanitarian leaders from reading the narratives and thinking about the questions raised at the end of each chapter. However, it seems to me that anyone, at any age, would benefit from reading the book. The 31 interviewees gave evidence of a deep response to those in need at all different ages and we could anticipate the same for everyone. Reading the book and taking note of the seven choice points gives readers an opportunity to evaluate their past decisions and become more intentional about reaching out to those in need and making a difference.

The book closes with a chapter giving practical information on how to get started with a humanitarian outreach initiative. I recommend the book to anyone wishing to be inspired or to inspire others to become more active in helping others. As the book affirms, all of the 31 humanitarian leaders reported being “happy” with the choices they had made; they all challenge readers to rethink their usual rationalizations for not making a bigger difference in a world of much need.

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