



Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy and Walking Humbly in the World

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No one said pursuing justice would be easy. The road can be so challenging and the destination so distant that you may be discouraged by a lack of progress, compassion or commitment in your quest for justice. How do you stay committed to the journey when God's kingdom can seem so slow in coming? Kent Annan understands the struggle of working for justice over the long haul. He confesses, "Over the past twenty years, I've succumbed to various failed shortcuts instead of living the freedom of faithful practices." In this book, he shares practices he has learned that will encourage and help you to keep making a difference in the face of the world's challenging issues. All Christians are called to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly in the world. *Slow Kingdom Coming* will guide and strengthen you on this journey to persevere until God's kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy and Walking Humbly in the World Details

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From Reader Review *Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy and Walking Humbly in the World* for online ebook

Caroline says

Words fail me in so many ways about this book. I took so many screen shots as I read the book and sent them to friends. This book challenged me and felt deeply uncomfortable and convicting at points? And I loved it! There are so many solid pointers for doing the work of justice well and in a way that is healthy and empowering for the individual and the community. A must read!

Jennie says

A very readable and practical guide to living a life of justice and mercy in a broken world. This book also gives encouragement for those who feel overwhelmed by the needs of the world. The practices Annan outlines will help strengthen community partnerships for the long haul, for the glory of God.

Davyd Gosselin says

Slow Kingdom Coming (IVP Books 2016) by Kent Annan is a nice blend of truth and grace for budding Mother Theresa's and NGO members everywhere. It's a book that can temper the hopeless romantic's idealism and reinvigorate the hardened veteran's heart. Plus, it's written like a guide book, easy to consult when things go awry in the field. It is a book about compassion, action, "truthing" and how to help people the correct way.

Annan is a veteran of the missions field, having spent a lot of time helping people and causes. Lately, his focus has been on Haiti and its people. He's learned a lot about listening and indigenous missionaries by spending time with people to find out exactly their needs and avoiding the usual "quick fix". His goal is to demonstrate the kingdom of God, not implement it.

Christians have a long history of taking the gospel to places and imposing it on locals who are assumed to be immoral animists. Annan is eager to point out the goal today is to come alongside the people that need help and partner/cooperate with what is already going on. The new paradigm is not to deliver Christ and kick out Satan, but to assume Jesus is already at work in people's hearts and listen to His leading along with the people who need help.

The author's approach is novel and fresh. It really marks the end of the traditional missionary or NGO. Annan ushers in a new generation of "do-gooders" who help the helpers to help those to help themselves. The days of enabling people and rescue-based (with exceptions) mission work is over. *Slow kingdom coming* is a long-term approach to mission work based on relationship and respect for the culture and people

first by spending time with them on their terms.

The author points out the limits of helping others. He quotes Kierkegaard when he makes the point that the goal is not about results and stats, but the manner in which help is delivered. Incomplete work done with good motives is better than hundreds of completed works done with wrong ones.

...[we are] not eternally responsible for whether we reach our goals within this world of time, but without exception, eternally responsible for the kind of means used. And when we only use those means which are genuinely good, then, in terms of the judgment of eternity, we are at the goal.

There is much more than I can cover in a review. I recommend the short book to anyone who cares about the world and its people. It's a keeper -- a fine guide on how to help, when to help and the limitations of both.

A final note on the title. After reading the book, I understand the slow kingdom coming as necessarily incomplete, not a real kingdom, more of an attitude marked by compassion and respect for all people. It is fundamental stuff: How we treat people speaks volumes.

Loretta says

This is a small book, but a good one for helping us to evaluate how we do and think about justice. Everything he talks about is applicable on any level, from the smallest acts of mercy to the largest aid organizations. I expect that I'll be referring back to this book and the 5 practices outlined often in the years to come.

Miranda Adderley says

challenging and offering a new perspective on working for justice

Heather Daugherty says

I liked this book, and will use it for training my short term missions teams. It had good illustrations, was solidly scriptural, and also was faithful to its premise.

James says

The vision of the Kingdom of God is one of justice—all wrongs put right, swords into plowshares, and all tears wiped from each and every eye. However, despite Jesus' claim (and ours) that the Kingdom of God is at hand, the work for justice remains exhausting work. We have a nation in the throes of debate over whose lives matter, systems still grind up the poor and the marginalized. The poor are always among us and the Kingdom of God is subject to violence. Lord have mercy. God's Kingdom is coming, but it often feels like it

doesn't come fast enough.

9780830844555 Kent Annan has written a hopeful book, extolling practices which will sustain us as we work for justice. *Slow Kingdom Coming* is rooted in Annan's own experience of working for justice, especially in Haiti (he serves as a codirector for Haiti Partners). This isn't really a 'spiritual disciplines book.' Annan's practices are about reorienting ourselves so that our work for justice is lived from a right center. These practices bleed into one another and it is hard to say where one starts and another ends. In one way or another, each of these practices have to do with truth-telling.

Annan's first practice is Attention or 'awakening to justice'—learning to pay attention to the voices of those who suffer. It means really looking at people and what their experience (32). Yet injustice abounds and Annan advocates that we focus our attention in one area (on an issue or a geographical area) so we will be able to work for change. He illustrates this with a Haitian proverb: *Pise gaye pa fe kim* (when your stream of pee hits the ground too widely, it doesn't make foam). "It's an earthy way of saying when our attention is too scattered, we won't make much difference" (33). Annan advocates setting aside time to discover what breaks our hearts to discover what we ought to pay attention to.

Confession is the second practice Annan discusses. In his focus on justice, he advises we confess our mixed motives in our work, our hero complex, our 'compassion fatigue,' our privilege, the pain we've caused and received, and our longing for change. This more than a personal confession but an honest look at systemic problems and our complicity in them.

The third practice is Respect. Annan describes the Haitian practice of greeting other when you pass their yard by calling out *honé* (honor). If they respond with *respé* (respect) you are invited in (64). This rhythm of honor and respect, means recognizing the personhood of others and serving them on their terms, not your own. When we take the honor-respect idea seriously, we listen to others to discover the best way to show mercy and we advocate for the rights of others.

The practice of Respect leads to Partnering. Instead of models of ministry and charitable work which promote a 'rescue partnership' or a 'fix-it partnership,' Annan encourages us to move beyond these to establish 'equal agency partnerships' where the people we serve have an equal share and stake in our work. This isn't an easy transition and involves, humble listening, an awareness of context and costs, a realistic view of sin, clear expectations and mutual accountability, preparing the way for the others, commitment to the long view, mutual trust and shared credit (89-95). In this we are also partnering with the God, that is already at work wherever we are (98).

The final practice is Truthing. Annan borrows the concept of 'ground truthing' from environmental sciences. Ground truthing establishes the reality of truth on the ground, as opposed to an aerial view. Annan advocates we take the data about injustice, and check it against the reality on the ground (and vice-versa). He suggests a sky-downward and a ground-upward approach which will help us improve our work for systematic change (118).

This isn't a 'how to' book and the five practices Annan recommends will look different for each of us. This book is helpful and hopeful and an invitation to work for justice. I recommend this book highly and think it would be a good resource for non-profits, ministries and missions programs. I give it five stars ?????.

Note: I received this book from SpeakEasy in exchange for my honest review.

Rand Hall says

Humbling...

I thought I was comfortable working in Crock-Pot mode. This was a good reality check that my Crock-Pot is more microwavish than I think

Tricia says

I was introduced to this author by my son Chris after he spent 6 months in Haiti. I have read all 3 of Kent Annan's books and been deeply challenged and touched by each one. This one is no exception. Sometimes as a person of privilege, I get paralyzed when trying to "do good" in our complicated world. Annan lays out very practical areas that we should each consider as we work for justice and mercy in our world. Highly pragmatic yet filled with inspiring stories, Kent Annan's on the ground experience as well as his obvious humility and self reflection combine to give us a gift as Christians trying to live a life of doing justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with our God.

Raj says

One of the things that continues to amaze me about life is when we think we have everything figured out and then we learn something new or suddenly see something in a different perspective and everything shifts again...do you ever get that? We're aware of our limitations when it comes to meeting the needs of our families, fulfilling the demands of our jobs, persevering in spite of the energy drain and the chronic pain, battling a long-standing habit, learning a new job after being laid off, staying in a difficult marriage and finding the strength needed to keep forging ahead when our dreams fail. We pretend we've got it together. We act like we're capable of handling any situation, but deep down we know we're not. The truth is, without God's grace and power we are inadequate.

Kent Annan's new book, *Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy, and Walking Humbly in the World*, allows one to take a deep breath and slow down, to focus and pay attention. Annan calls us to Attention, Confession, Respect, Partnering, and Truthing. It's a simple, humble, and healthy way to serve. *Slow Kingdom Coming* shows us that it's equally important to examine our motives when contributing or volunteering. "Is handing a homeless man five or ten dollars 'cheap compassion'?" "Am I willing to learn about the homeless needs in my community?" He also offers a great perspective on what "missions" should look like. His examples of how some short-term mission trips have done more harm than good were cutting and yet completely necessary to understand all of the implications of doing missions that so often we never consider (ie; taking clothing/shoes to local people can actually hurt the local economy by taking business from local tailors and shoemakers. If we want to give people clothes, we should consider buying them in-country and thereby providing work for local people.) It's easy for us to drop off our old clothing and feel good about ourselves, but oftentimes, our desire to "feel good" supersedes the real needs of the people we are trying to serve. In this book, he shares practices he has learned that will encourage and help you to keep making a difference in the face of the world's challenging issues. All Christians are called to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly in the world. *Slow Kingdom Coming* will guide and strengthen you on this journey to persevere until God's kingdom comes on earth.

It is a wonderful book very insightful, introspective, mission oriented and inspiring. It should be required reading for anyone who is serious about participating in the slow yet wonderful work of God's redemption in the world." I would highly recommend this book. I believe it is one that I will come back to again and again to deepen my engagement with the needs of the world and to find my place in God's story of bringing justice to the world.

Catherine Mullaney says

Annan is a great encourager. He lays out 5 practices for those of us who find ourselves in justice work, learning how to love mercy, and sometimes being humbled as we sometimes find ourselves stumbling as we walk through this life.

Perhaps, I will return here and write a more in-depth review but for now, I will just say that this is one of those books that I could read every 18 months or so.

Mary Lou says

Soundbite:

"Awakening to justice...involves listening to other people's lives...We practice awakening to justice by choosing who we talk with, what stories we read, what trips we take...That opens people's eyes to educational challenges and also pulls back the curtain on big systemic issues of wealth, poverty, government representations, and race that many of them didn't know in-depth before. Part of this practice of attention involves asking ourselves, What breaks my heart? In the world, my country or my neighborhood, what makes me angry because it should be better? Questions like these can awaken our attention for how we are called to serve the Kingdom...We are accountable for the responsibilities we are trusted with, not for all the needs around us" (Kent Annan, *Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy, and Walking Humbly in the World*, Intervarsity Press, 2016, pp. 30-32, 35).

Review:

Kent Annan has been committed to justice ministries for 25 years. During that time, he says "I've been paralyzed by the complexity of trying to help others. I've huddled in bed during daylight because of sadness and discouragement. I've rushed to get good things done and so didn't treat people as well as I should. I'm still confessing regularly my faults and longing to better participate in justice—that God's Kingdom would come on earth as it is in Heaven. I confess that I wish this weren't such a slow kingdom coming" (Kent Annan, *Slow Kingdom Coming: Practices for Doing Justice, Loving Mercy, and Walking Humbly in the World*, Intervarsity Press, 2016, p. 9).

His book combines his personal experience of working for justice with five practices that can help readers "find the freedom to handle what you can and what you are called to—and handle this well—as we respond faithfully to needs and opportunities around us" (p. 11). The practices are "attention (awakening to justice), confession (the posture for engaging), respect (the golden rule for helping), partnering (with, not for), and truthing (hard thinking and feet on the ground)" (pp. 27-120).

Many North American Christians have a sincere desire to bring justice to our broken world. But they also need to recognize where they "ignore part of reality or live with a partially anesthetized heart" (p. 55). They need the encouragement and the correctives that Annan provides in this book.

Excerpts:

“Over the past 20 years, I have learned that kneeling for confession is the right posture for entering into the work of justice—with humility, supplication, and vulnerability. If we don’t lower ourselves before God and neighbors, we will fail at lasting change; we need to be transformed ourselves as we work for the world to become more just...Sin can blind us—so we are unaware of selfishness that leads us to exploit when we tend to help...Sin can blind us—so we can’t see the needs under the surface” (pp. 44, 46).

In Haiti, when you approach someone’s yard, “you call out, hon?, meaning honor. Saying this announces that you come to visit with honor for them, their family, their property. You are acknowledging their humanity, dignity, their right of response. You are confirming that it’s up to them whether you enter or not and on what terms...Will they accept you and what you bring? Resp?, meaning respect, is the word you wait to hear if you are invited in...Respect is having a due regard for the feelings, wishes, and rights of others...The practice of respect has to happen at every stage of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly in the world...If justice work involves...helping people find their way into more respectful circumstances, then every step must be taken while practicing respect...through listening, imagining, and promoting rights...Respect is called the Golden Rule for helping” (pp. 63-65).

“The scientific process called truthing...involves checking big picture assessment against a reality on the ground...I was fortunate to see examples of truthing early in my justice work from people like Scott McCracken...Scott had developed a vibrant center for refugees (in Europe) to access helpful services and find a supportive community. His work was informed by spending two weeks living on the streets with the refugees. Scott did this so he could gain new insight into what was and wasn’t helpful for people he was serving. It was done within a long-term commitment, not as poverty tourism” (pp. 104, 108).

Bob says

<Summary: From years of experience in justice work, Kent Annan commends five practices that both better enable us to serve and to sustain our efforts for the long haul.

One of the delights of working with collegians is that every generation has a fresh passion to change the world. The challenge is that real change is not simple and takes a long time. Often, change efforts end up not fitting the needs of those served, are culturally insensitive, reflect a good deal of hubris, fail to treat those served as full partners, and attempt to build on false premises. At best, the change is often superficial, sometimes it makes things worse, and often the change agents end up burned out and disillusioned.

Kent Annan has worked for a couple decades addressing relief and development work in Haiti, child exploitation in Haiti and southeast Asia, and worked with refugees in Europe. Out of this experience he commends five practices that sustain those who pursue justice for the kingdom of God's sake when that change is slow in coming.

The practices are:

1. Attention. Awakening to the need for change, focusing so we can help well, and renewing our commitment. I'm struck that individuals and congregations can have "justice work attention deficit disorder"

running from activity to activity rather than attending to where we need to change, maximally focusing our efforts, and committing for the long haul.

2. Confession. Confessing mixed motives, desiring to feel good when helping, our public gestures, hero complexes, compassion fatigue, and privilege. "Confession helps us to humbly lift up the agency of others and be wary of being the hero of our own story."

3. Respect. This is the practice of the Golden Rule "through listening, imagining and promoting rights." Listening gives those we serve a voice in how we serve. Imagining frees us from cheap compassion and promoting the rights of others means being guided by the rights for which we advocate as we relate to those for whom we advocate.

4. Partnering. We come to recognize we work with and not for others. We move from rescue partnership to fix-it partnership to equal agency partnership and finally partnering with God.

5. Truthing. Without forsaking love, truthing looks long and hard at the real situation on the ground to best steward resources. Personal truthing gets on the ground rather than trusting in second hand reports. It uses data and research to find out how well proposed courses are actually working. It is incremental, recognizing that learning the truth is an iterative process.

Annan must like the number five, because his concluding chapter suggests five practical ways to keep moving forward in these practices, even when we are overwhelmed:

1. Leave behind what holds you back.
2. Step forward with faith.
3. Find opportunities for healing and reconciliation.
4. Renew a vision of mutual flourishing.
5. Find joy.

The appendix to this book has additional comments of how the five practices work together. These and the practical suggestions as well as model prayers at various points make this brief book full of spiritual enrichment as well as concrete help.

As I write, many of my friends are asking how they might pursue justice in a political climate where many at home and abroad are feeling left out and fearful that their rights will be eroded. I would highly commend this book as a handbook to all who desire to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God in the world" (Micah 6:8) and to do it well for as long as it takes.

My_Strange_Reading says

#strangesummerreading Slow Kingdom Coming by Kent Annan ?????????? I've been reading this book with the team I'm joining for a mission trip to Kenya this summer, and it was so incredible. It reminds me very much of When Helping Hurts, but I feel like this book is much more hopeful and actually gives the reader/perspective-missionary steps and practices that can be used instead of just telling us how short term missions are worthless. I loved the heartfelt honesty, thought-provoking insights and getting to reflect with my team. If you are heading on a short-term mission trip or are thinking about helping a ministry, give this a read! This fulfills No. 29 of #my2018strangepanzanellareadingchallenge CHANGES PERSPECTIVE

