

Reading Journal by Steve Case

The Book

Lewis, Barbara A. (2008) *The teen guide to global action: How to connect with others (near & far) to create social change*. Minneapolis, MN, Free Spirit Publishing. 126 pages.

A Few Words About the Author(s)

Much of Barbara Lewis' work has been with children. This publication deals with youth. Her background is public school education. She received an award for service from President Bill Clinton and has been featured on television and in newspapers. She speaks on character development, service and social action.

A Brief Synopsis of the Book

The book title proves to be quite descriptive. The author presents a four-step process for individuals and/or groups to get involved in social action types of service. She also identifies the pros and cons of joining an existing group or creating your own for serving.

Major areas for social action presented include human rights, hunger and homelessness, health and safety, education, environment and conservation, youth representation, and peace and friendship. Each area follows a format of facts, local ideas, and global ideas.

Sprinkled throughout the book are subject appropriate lists of websites as well as personal stories of global action youth who could be considered heroes for what they have done. These stories come from more than 30 countries.

Other items that pop up in side bars and boxes are youth organizations you could connect with for each particular area of social action, plus some quick tips, activities, and even stories of young people from the past whose impact continues to be felt.

Each page is busy with different “call outs” and shaded areas, side bars, colors, shapes, artwork and shades mixing on the pages. Yet there is an organized flow to the presentation with plenty of side trips available.

The book is true to its title.

Agree/Disagree/Unsure

My first impression of the book was a simplistic description of some common sense planning to get young people involved in service. But by the second chapter I started to be wowed by the volume of information, especially the websites and organizations and stats given for each area. The clincher was stories of young people who are reaching out and making some significant differences, and they live in so many different countries.

I ended up feeling like quite a novice in the midst of a seasoned professional. The author knows her stuff and freely shares it. Her perspective extends well beyond church circles. In fact, the few mentions of religious entities indicate an acknowledgement, but certainly not the primary emphasis of her book. Her public school teaching experience probably influences her view, just as my church-based ministry left me feeling stunted in comparison.

Lewis operates from United Nations declarations and manifestos, plus national government issues rather than from denominational outreach or missions. While her ideas are significant and practical, they have more to do with civic responsibility instead of the Gospel motivation that spurs me. In fact, I don't recall the author giving a reason to be involved in service, other than an expectation that readers would already be interested.

The stories of real young people making incredible impacts inspired me. I'm left wondering why I don't challenge young people to more and greater responses to the need and also to God's power.

What I Will Use in My Ministry

One of the first things I will use in my ministry from this book is the great collection of websites. I will then become more familiar with existing agencies that I can point others to and possibly connect with myself.

The stories that inspired me could be a resource for inspiring others in some of my sermons and public presentations. But some of them seemed too grandiose to really believe. Yet others showed difficulty, and yet impact.

I will refer to more United Nations actions and even use some as a good starting point for church involvement both on a local and on a global basis. I prefer to tap into ADRA's opportunities for financial involvement in various areas of service, but I'm left with the expectation that if I want to tie into something local, there are probably other agencies well ahead of what my church currently is doing. It would probably be better for our youth to join something already in motion than to re-invent the wheel on some of these things.