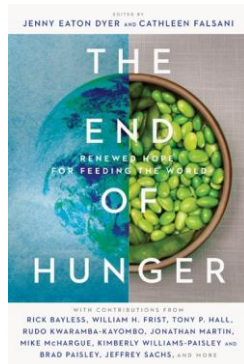


BOOK REVIEW

The End of Hunger: Renewed Hope for Feeding the World

Eds: Jenny Eaton Dyer and Cathleen Falsani

Reviewed by Yacob Esayas



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By taking an eclectic approach that includes inspiring and interconnected stories interwoven throughout the book, *The End of Hunger* aims to illustrate that chronic food insecurity has potentially debilitating impacts on society as a whole. The book is divided into three parts: “An Overview of the Problem of Hunger;” “The First One Thousand Days: Young Women, Mothers, and Children;” and “The Way Forward.” It provides a startling description of hunger and the physical, psychological, and spiritual impacts of malnutrition and food insecurity. The vehemently clear message is that the lack/shortage of food stunts people today, and also affects future generations.

A telling depiction of hunger is presented to the reader. Mike McHargue states that “more than 700 million people worldwide are hungry, starving, or malnourished” (10). He continues, “we already grow enough food to feed every person living on Earth. What we are lacking is not the capacity to produce food, but the will to make sure the food we grow makes it into hungry bellies everywhere” (10). What we lack is not food, but rather the heart to give.

Editors Dyer and Falsani believe that it behooves everyone in society to think of the hundreds of millions of people who go to bed hungry. The stories included throughout the book aim to put a human face on statistics. These stories are very personal and often heart-wrenching. William Frist narrates a story of a

mother who was too weak to carry both of her children, which forced her to make the heart-breaking decision to leave one behind in hopes of saving the other (22).

Part Two of the book expounds on the importance of feeding children for the first one thousand days of their lives and all the multifaceted impacts food security has on their growth. The inhumane and demoralizing effects of lack of food are made real through selected stories from around the world. Vasco, from Malawi, was born to poor parents who were not able to sustain him. Both his parents died before Vasco was five. Nighty is a poor mother from Uganda. Abandoned by two husbands, she struggles mightily to feed her five children, a struggle that continues to this day. Her story highlights the family’s experience of such terrible hunger that they all vomit when they finally get something to eat.

Beyond these individual stories, the book also zooms out to a macro-level, persuasively explaining how hunger affects the peace and stability of nations. It argues that most countries that have fallen into social and political conflicts already suffer from severe food insecurity. The authors make a case that the centrality of food security in stabilizing a country is unequivocal. As David Beasley states, “working toward the global goal of zero hunger truly is the best defense for the nations of the world, because it creates stability that reduces the risk of conflict” (62). In addressing the problem of hunger, Beasley argues that food could be used as a “weapon of peace” (60).

Helene Gayle explains that, while the quantity of food is essential, the nutritional quality of the food is equally important. Contributors Helene Gayle, Cathleen Falsani and Mark K. Shriver emphasize the need to give special attention to women, particularly mothers. The nutritional status of mothers impacts the child’s well-being since the nutrition cycle crosses generations. The mother’s malnourishment impacts her child’s physical and cognitive development before and after birth. Ultimately, child malnourishment at early stages of life leads to poor school performance, negatively influences people’s income-earning potential, and traps individuals in a vicious poverty cycle. Therefore, focusing on child and maternal

nutrition can break the link between intergenerational poverty and malnutrition (121-122).

One of the main purposes of the book is to argue that the problem of access to food is undoubtedly solvable, if there is enough social and political will. Dyer and Falsani marshal some striking success stories that encourage people to support organizations that ensure food provision, combat malnutrition, and work to overcome poverty. Indeed, if we can change the mindset of all people, young and old, global hunger could end. As evidence, Will Moore highlights work over the last 25 years to end extreme poverty. Organized efforts have resulted in lifting over one billion people out of poverty, and cutting hunger in half. According to Moore, the progress made thus far is reason to hope for a better future in dealing with hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. Jonathan Martin makes a compelling argument that Christians should be at the forefront of leadership in feeding the hungry, who are clearly among “the least of these.”

Unfortunately, *The End of Hunger* is silent in its critique of the aid industry. It would have been worthwhile to discuss some of the failures of humanitarian organizations, despite their good intentions. The editors could have addressed the impacts of various strategies and investment of billions of dollars to solve hunger throughout the world as the results of this massive investment have been mixed.

This book is meant to inspire people to join the cause of eradicating hunger, but it lacks scientific analysis and does not include much of the existing academic literature to support this cause. Even so, Dyer and Falsani have assembled some profound success stories of individuals and shown us a way forward. The book consistently echoes a clear message: it is possible to end hunger. Though the current COVID pandemic increases the probability of a rise in global food insecurity, we can turn to decades-long humanitarian efforts that exemplify the possibility of ending world hunger, and sooner than we once thought possible.

In sum, the human stories in *The End of Hunger* make the reader feel emotionally connected to the issue and provoke a heartfelt call to action. This is a book that will inspire Christian readers to do more for the poor and vulnerable. It challenges an often-complacent church to live up to the Scripture's central theme to help “the least of these.” It also rouses those who are silent in the face of the misery of millions, if not billions, and seeks to inspire us to engage in the noble cause of creating a better future for all.

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