

## BOOK REVIEW

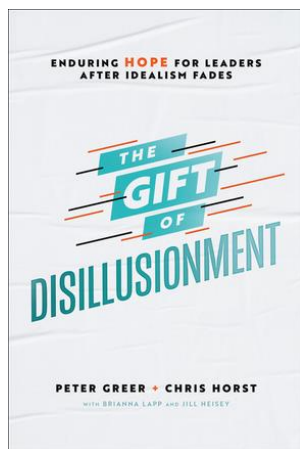
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# The Gift of Disillusionment: Enduring Hope for Leaders after Idealism Fades

*By Peter Greer and Chris Horst*

Reviewed by Saroj Chettri

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\$22.99

In *The Gift of Disillusionment: Enduring Hope for Leaders after Idealism Fades*, Peter Greer and Christ Horst provide a gift to leaders, particularly those in ministry, nonprofits, and humanitarian sectors, who feel burned out, stressed, and running low on hope. Their basic argument is that disillusionment, a state of discouragement, is a gift for Christians who are struggling because the idealism they once enjoyed, when they brimmed with optimism, hope, and visions of a better world, is fading. Disillusionment comes because of inevitable challenges in ministry and personal life, including racial injustice, poverty, political polarization, and leaders' moral failures, including those of pastors, all of which involve crushed expectations and painful experiences. Individuals cannot master these circumstances, engineer happiness, or find refuge from real pain, and, as a result, hardship and deep disappointment may become uncontrollable (15). Yet God does not allow such despair to lead to cynicism, using it instead for good; that is if one allows him. And here is where the gift of disillusionment lies: it is an invitation to turn toward a closer relationship with God.

Greer and Horst remind readers that disillusionment and cynicism need not win the battle, for God is always available and always at work.

The book is divided into four sections. The first discusses false hope, faint hope, and forgotten hope, all of which lead to disillusionment. The second section explains how disillusionment leads to enduring hope in the midst of suffering, surrender, and commitment. The third section focuses on justice, sacrifice, and forgiveness. And the fourth speaks on moving onward with discernment, obedience, perseverance, and community. The authors remind readers that in experiences of lost hope, one should look upward, not inward. Instead of relying on one's own personal abilities, we do so much better to depend totally upon God, because he is the ultimate hope. One should not rely on personal strength and abilities but on God's strength. It is this type of rooted faith that nourishes what the authors call "enduring hope," modeled by Jesus and his disciples in suffering, and that is one of the distinctive features of the Christian faith (85). The authors continuously remind us to focus on love, surrender, commitment, sacrifice, forgiveness, discernment, obedience, and perseverance.

The authors' insights come from the inspiring stories and challenges of Christian leaders: pastors, doctors, financial experts, educators, and other leaders from Guatemala, Poland, the Philippines, Oklahoma, Detroit, Zambia, and elsewhere. They have all experienced the suffering of disillusionment, but were able to find hope by turning their respective crises into opportunities to place a deeper trust in God and to find there an enduring hope. Each chapter contains a story of frustrated people in pain who manage to look upward and rely on God. Their hope was rooted not in their circumstances nor in their ability to change them, but in their trust in God's infinite faithfulness (77). Such trust ultimately helped them overcome the obstacles in their work and make them stronger and more effective.

One highlight is the story of Jo Anne Lyons, founder of World Hope International. Lyons was raised in a Christian household and, along with her

husband Wayne, developed a Wesleyan church in Kansas City. During the civil rights movement, she found her church remained silent; the congregation wanted no role in the protests even if they were peaceful and just (44). Church leaders ignored her pleas to become engaged in these matters of gospel-centered social justice, refusing to act on matters that, from her perspective, so clearly mattered to God (45). As a result, Lyons grew cynical toward the church she once loved. But at some point she realized she should look to God for hope rather than to a church, and she found that God was the only reliable source of enduring hope. "She turned upward to God. She prayed, worked, and waited, and all the while, God sustained a vision in her heart for the church to bring the Great Commission and the greatest commandments together" (49). Though Lyons had every reason to stay cynical, she overcame cynicism when she relied totally on God and gained the courage to move forward by connecting gospel witness with social action. That connection evolved into World Hope International. Today, World Hope International serves over thirty countries to alleviate suffering and injustice through provision of clean water and energy, global health care, human rights services, and social ventures.

Throughout the book, Greer and Horst draw on the prophet Jeremiah's journey, reminding leaders to seek God's guidance, even as they persevere and remain obedient. Jeremiah had the extremely difficult and painful task of communicating God's message to a people who did not want to listen. He was despised, rejected, humiliated, arrested, assaulted, and threatened with abduction and death. Even his relatives conspired against him and betrayed him. Through all of this, Jeremiah often inspired hope in people during difficult times. Through all of the turmoil, he remained faithful to God and his call. As the authors note, "Jeremiah did not fully understand God's plan, yet he obeyed. He chose to kneel, bow, and submit" (174). They explain how Jeremiah serves as an example of the gift of disillusionment in that self-reliance is an idol of illusion.

The Gift of Disillusionment can help leaders and Christians of all backgrounds move forward by reminding them to trust God regardless of their challenges. The real stories, along with the references to Jeremiah, will help all those working in difficult situations and who have lost hope. While it would be wonderful to have more details of the personal challenges faced by the leaders mentioned, the accounts provided from different countries serve as models of direction and discernment for continuing to follow the call to participate in God's work in the world. I recommend this book because readers will feel inspired to seek God's presence regardless of their suffering, to resist the temptation to rely on their own personal

resources, and thereby engage in honest evaluations of our human limitations and our ultimate dependence on God.

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