

Julie Clawson takes us on a tour of everyday life and shows how our ordinary lifestyle choices have big implications for justice around the world. She unpacks how we get our food and clothing and shows us the surprising costs of consumer waste. How we live can make a difference not only for our own health but also for the well-being of people across the globe. The more sustainable our lifestyle, the more just our world will be.

Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of Our Daily Choices
October 2009, \$16, 208 pages, paper, 0-8308-3628-4

So What Does This Call to Justice Involve?

It sounds great to talk about restoring broken relationships and healing the world, but it's a tad harder to figure out exactly how to go about doing so. It may be easy to see that people are hungry, but seeing how we deny the image of God in others is a bit more difficult. We may not tend to think that the ways we live our everyday lives have much effect on the lives of others, but our circle of influence is actually much larger than we think.

The youth pastor I had as a teenager liked the statement, "Every decision has a price tag." I think he intended it to scare us away from behaviors like premarital sex and drinking, but I believe its application can go much further. Every decision we make does carry a price, but that price is often paid by the people whose lives are affected by our actions. Every decision we make is an ethical decision, which forces us to choose whether we will act out of love or end up denying the image of God in others.

For example, that banana my daughter ate for breakfast this morning involved an ethical decision. By buying and eating that banana, I support everything that banana represents. If that banana was grown by farmers who were kept in near-slavelike conditions, paid pennies a day, exposed to hazardous chemicals and beaten by hired terrorists if they protested their work conditions, I am supporting those things.

Or how about my T-shirt? If a fourteen-year-old girl, who is forced to work in a factory because her parents owe money to the owner (which they borrowed to pay for medical bills), made my T-shirt, and she is paid, maybe, five cents a shirt (that I paid \$19.99 for) by the owner who also forces her to sleep with him in order to keep her job, then I am supporting her exploitation and rape.

Don't get me wrong: I know no one reading this book consciously supports slavery, terrorism, exploitation or rape. But we vote with our money, spent on such bananas or T-shirts, and we make the ethical decision to support those very things whether we intend to or not. We effectively deny the image of God in those workers by telling them that our shopping habits and consumer needs are more important than their dignity of life. The cost they are paying is the price tag of our decisions.



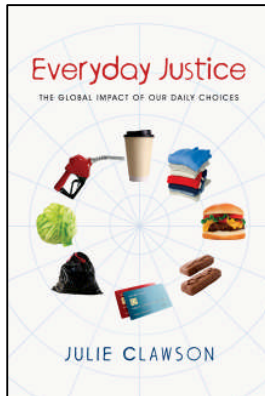
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BOOK EXCERPT



“Julie Clawson had me at ‘Don’t panic.’ While many resources on social justice leave even the most compassionate souls and generous hearts frozen with an overwhelming panic from not knowing where to begin, Everyday Justice fires readers up and leaves them ready to change the world—starting right in their everyday lives.”

—Caryn Rivadeneira,
managing editor, *Gifted for Leadership*,
and author of *Mama’s Got a Fake I.D.*

Living justly means understanding the impact of our decisions. It involves not only an awareness of the needs of others, but it chooses to love others in a way that cares for their needs. It forces us to take a hard look at how our everyday choices (what we wear, what we eat, what we drive, etc.) affect others. An important aspect of acting justly is to, first, stop being complicit in injustice. As [Isaiah 58:9-12 in *The Message*] mentions, the justice God wants from us involves being “generous with the hungry,” but also getting “rid of unfair practices.” We will still need to be consumers, but instead of becoming complicit in injustice, we can promote ethical consumption. Ethical consumption implies that we will apply our moral values and ethical standards to our consumer habits. We don’t opt out of a necessary system, but we attempt to redeem it as we live by a more consistent ethic.

But justice is complicated. Sometimes it is hard to know how our decisions affect others, and it is even harder to discover loving alternatives. To make things worse, acting justly involves some serious lifestyle changes that can be really difficult. That’s okay. The point isn’t to instantly create a perfectly just world with the wave of some magic wand. Justice is a journey that is different for every person, and it proceeds at differing speeds. There is no need to get overwhelmed. If we each start small and promote justice where we can, when we can, that marks the beginning of the revolution of love. All we have to do is take that first step into the call that Jesus gave us to love others. And then take the next, and the next, and the next . . .

—Taken from the introduction



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