

Comparative Book Review

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Date: Feb. 20th 2023

### **Introduction to Book Review**

I read *The Insanity of God* by Nik Ripken with Gregg Lewis and *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon for this comparative book review. Although not my intention, these two books gave me very different insights and also made me feel very different emotions. Reading "The Insanity of God" made me feel so heavy, sad, and emotional, while "The Art of Neighboring" felt like I had learned an important intellectual lesson and learned the contents of a well-organized lecture.

#### **"The Art of Neighboring by Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon" Summary**

This book came like a well-organized lecture in 12 chapters. As I read this book, I took note of important information without realizing it. In this book, the author tells us who our real neighbor is based on the Bible, and gives that neighbor the task of how to become a great neighbor.

The author presents a new approach to neighbors and introduces the fruits obtained through practice, emphasizing that the most important thing in forming a neighbor is "relationship". According to the author, "Relationships are progressive and don't all happen overnight, but there are some simple steps you can take that will start you on an amazing journey.(p.25)"

The author emphasizes that love is the condition for forming relationships with neighbors. In addition, it suggests that we need to make the right "choice" about "time", an obstacle in forming relationships with neighbors. According to the author, "we all have limited time and energy and if we don't purposefully choose how we will spend it, those choices will be made for us." (p.51)

The solution to this problem is said to be in setting priorities. Also, the obstacle that arises in forming relationships with neighbors is fear. In response, the author encourages us to deal wisely with this fear.

In addition, in this book, the author talks about the experiences and stories of 'Block Party' through several chapters to build relationships with neighbors. Although this practical method is helpful in forming relationships with neighbors, I came to think that this should not stop at ordinary social gatherings.

The most important point in this book for me is at the beginning of Chapter 7. It means that when we reach out to our neighbors, we must reach out to them with our lives. This is the missionary perspective the author presents to us.

The author is telling us to have unconditional love for our neighbors in the way we treat our neighbors. In other words, to be a true friend to your neighbor. The author also says that one important thing here is to have boundaries. We are wary of overdoing it without boundaries for the purpose of helping our neighbors. It tells us that sometimes it is more effective and important to present a solution than to step forward and solve a neighbor's problem.

"It's the difference between being put on the hook to provide a solution and helping a person find a solution for himself or herself."(p.135)

Finally, another important factor in our relationship with our neighbors is that we must put the focus on Jesus as 'being a good neighbor'. We must not forget that the important thing in building relationships with neighbors is "forgiveness." We all make mistakes and make excuses for our mistakes because we are human. In this regard, we learn through Jesus that a 'good neighbor' focused on Jesus is to have a heart of forgiveness regardless of circumstances.

I think this is the 'beauty of the art of neighboring' that the author refers to.

**Strengths of the author's ideas**

In this book, you can see that the author not only presents a practical way to be a neighbor, but also considers the practical obstacles that come with it. Also, the author brings out problems in great detail to help readers face them.

**Potential weaknesses in the author's ideas**

This book first introduces a practical way to know who your neighbor is. In the Great Commission of Jesus and the command to love one's neighbor, it is said to practice the concept of this neighbor by considering it as the people next to, behind, and in front of where one lives. I think it is difficult to do this in a nuclear-uniform society like now. This is because this era is a society in which personal privacy is considered important. For example, in the old days it was natural to ask for a neighbor's name, do him a favor, and take an interest in him. However, in modern times, such actions of people can make people feel uncomfortable.

### **“The Insanity of God by Nik Ripken with Gregg Lewis” Summary**

Through this book, I faced three heartbreaking realities. My heart ached as I saw Christians all over the world who were being persecuted and suffering for being Christians, and I shed tears because the gospel of Christ was still being preached and the blood of the martyrs was being shed despite such intense persecution. And, unlike Christians who give up their lives and fight fiercely for the gospel, we have a heart of repentance as we see ourselves living in the world as if we have lost the power of the gospel.

Through what the author directly experienced after coming to Somaliland, he says that this place is 'hell' (the theologian's expression of hell being completely separated from God). The author continues to talk about the concept of 'evil' at the beginning of this book, and it was found that the evil is the pain caused by 'civil war' (p.21). However, the evil goes further and is called 'drugs'. The truth made it even more miserable. It was unbelievable that what had to be provided to the suffering people was not 'good', food or water, but 'evil'.

Among the regions of Somalia introduced in this book, "Mogadishu" was not so unfamiliar to me. A few years ago, among the films made in Korea, I saw a movie called "Mogadishu" based on the civil war in Somalia. My heart was devastated by the unrealistic content throughout the movie, which was made so realistically.

He said this. "I cried out to heaven: "God, where are you? Do you know what is happening in this place?" What kind of God would allow this to happen."(p.20) I also had this mind.

In this book, the author says that Somalia feels like going to another planet. In this situation, what did the author feel? It is the spiritual hunger of the people where was overwhelming.

Why does Christianity have so much suffering and persecution? Numerous persecutions are a distinctive feature of Christianity No other religion had the same persecution and suffering

as Christianity. However, that Christianity is the religion of truth will be proved through persecution and suffering. Even in this era, Christianity is still inheriting the history of many opposition and persecution. Those who live a life of faith in a peaceful situation may be considered too unrealistic even if they actually read this book.

### **Strengths of the author's ideas**

This book touches the emotions by conveying the story to the depths of the heart of the reader, and I think it is enough to challenge the mission in the mind. At the end of the book, the authors confess their calling to the great adventure of telling lost souls about Jesus and teaching them to apply the Word to their lives.

### **Potential weaknesses in the author's ideas**

In fact, it seemed that there were no potential weaknesses in the author's idea that I discovered through this book. Of course, if I read this book one more time, I think that I may find a part that can be viewed critically, so when summer vacation comes, I will read this book one more time.

## **Book Comparison**

### **What do the two authors have in common?**

Both books introduce authors with a missionary mindset. It also seems to show that many of the people these authors met on their journeys form relationships in faith, becoming exemplary and inspiring relationships for them. In addition, both of these books can be found at the end of the book, challenging readers for missionary work and encouraging them to love their neighbors.

### **On what issues do the authors differ?**

Although this book has the same missionary mind, it shows a big difference in the content and story. In *The Art of Neighboring*, I am looking for love for my neighbor and mission within the boundary where I live, while in *The Insanity of God*, I find love for my neighbor and mission elsewhere, such as "another planet."

## **Application**

### **How could the authors' ideas impact you as a pastor or leader of a church?**

Through these two books, I learned a different, but important missionary mindset. Through *The Insanity of God*, I have not forgotten that there are still people on this earth who suffer and shed the blood of martyrdom because of the gospel, and I have to look back on my faith and live a life of practicing Jesus' great command. I learned. In addition, *The Art of Neighboring* book makes me realize that I have to look back on my neighbors in this current life and try to form a relationship with them in a practical way.

**How could the authors' ideas impact your church?**

Currently, the church I serve is pursuing "Missio Dei," that is, a missionary church. I will try to practice the thoughts of the authors found in these two books by sharing them in my church small group.

**Conclusion**

First of all, I am so happy and grateful that I was able to read these two books. Sometimes, we wonder if our lives in modern times are not too self-centered. Even Christians tend to think only of their individual religious life, their family, and the community they belong to, and neglect to look after their neighbors or neighbors in distant countries. These two books have made me think quite a bit, and again I have a heart to embrace not only myself, but also the neighbors I live in, the people I meet, and even the people who have nothing to do with me. created an opportunity

Now, through Compassion International, I have been supporting several children in Africa for almost 15 years, albeit for a very small amount. However, I realized that I had not prayed with all my heart for them. So, it seems that it is time to realize again the importance of praying for them as well as financial support.