

Comparative Book Review

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Introduction to Book Review

The books *ethNYcity The Nations, tongues, and Faiths of Metropolitan New York* and *The Art of Neighboring* explained the importance for Christians to get to know their neighbors. The authors also explained that learning more about the community leads people to find ways to support their needs. In this comparative book review, I will be discussing the similarities of both books. The information provided in *ethNYcity* helps support the initiatives in *The Art of Neighboring*. The core theme of both books expressed that as Christians, knowing the community that we live in helps us live a more Christ-filled life.

The Art of Neighboring- Summary

Jay Pathak starts the book by explaining that pastors gathered around to learn about ways that they can support the government in meeting the needs of people. In the meeting, a local mayor explained to the clergy that they needed to focus more on relationships than programs. “Bob Frie, a local mayor, stated that, ‘Relationships are more effective than programs because they are ongoing and organic’ (Pathak,19).” The pastor found that the biblical reference that supports this idea comes from Jesus telling his followers that the most important commandment is to love God and their Neighbors. He also referenced the parable of the good samaritan to show that a good neighbor meets the needs of people that come across.

The goal is to build relationships, know your neighborhood and build relationships. The pastor explained many different opportunities to show the love of Christ through relationships. Jay Pathak addressed some issues around the fear that some people are limited to practicing neighboring because of the fear of the unknown. Jay Pathak explained that some of those fears are justified but also fueled by the unknown. He explained the natural progression toward relationships starts with being acquaintances with strangers. As people build relationships from

acquaintances to relationships, they start to learn more in-depth of the needs of one another. As the needs of one another are being met, they start to work together to provide resources for one another.

Strengths of the author's ideas

The books *ethNYcity The Nations, tongues, and Faiths of Metropolitan New York* and *The Art of Neighboring* explained the importance for Christians to get to know their neighbors. The authors also explained that learning more about the community leads people to find ways to support their needs. In this comparative book review, I will be discussing the similarities of both books. The information provided in *ethNYcity* helps support the initiatives in *The Art of Neighboring*. The core theme of both books expressed that as Christians, knowing the community that we live in helps us live a more Christ-filled life.

Potential weaknesses in the author's ideas

I believe that the book is practical and clear about ways to practice neighboring. Jay Pathak explained different challenges that people have faced and provided a resolution for those issues. As I read the book, I felt that this idea seems too practical for people not to practice. I find it difficult that Christians have to be convinced to do this, and I believe that the church could do a better job of encouraging its members to live a Christ-filled life. As a New Yorker, I understand the natural habit to isolate instead of integrate. I believe that because most of the time, people work in different areas than they live, so they do not have the time and space to commit to neighboring effectively. Jay Pathak explained that people could start with the little that they have, find their natural gift, and build relationships naturally. The only requirement is for people to be open enough to build relationships and be committed to filling in the gaps where their gifting leads.

EthNYcity- The Nations, Tongues, and faiths of Metropolitan New York Summary

Meredith Lee and Chris Clayman explained the different ethnic groups that are represented in New York city. Lee explained that through her experience in New York, she believes that Christians would benefit to learn a little about every nation that is represented. Lee states, “ The gospel, at its simplest, is the good news that God has provided a way of salvation for all who believe Jesus died and rose again, taking the punishment of our sin upon Himself” (p.9). Lee quoted that after explaining that due to the diversity in New York city, people may share the Christian faith, but because of their cultural background, they express their faith differently. Even those with different religions, the sentiments of Lee quote remains, the gospel is the news that everyone, no matter the nationality, race, economic class has access to salvation through Christ. In this book Lee and Clayman dedicate a page to explain the culture background of every ethnic group represented in New York city. As they explain the simple facts about every nation, the page concludes with a prayer request.

Strengths of the author’s ideas-

The history of every ethnic group is important to being able to serve the community effectively as a Christian. In the introduction, Lee explained that people immigrated to New York for different reasons. In the pages, Lee gave a broad explanation on the reason that the majority of people moved to New York. Another important insight was an understanding of the faith culture that they come from, and best ways for Christians to reach out to them and connect.

Potential weaknesses in the author’s ideas

The weakness is that the one-pager only gives an overview of people’s ethnicity and history. The broad aspect of this, does not provide space to make connections and learn more about individuals' experiences. Facts seem to take away from the human experience of these

people and the vast overview does not express the ideas of every demographic group. I found it interesting that the authors separated Indians by different groups. I also noticed that they separated the caribbean from Afro caribbean and Indian caribbean. I do understand the need to differentiate, because each ethnic group has their own experiences, but it was not explained thoroughly their reasoning to separate the ethnic groups the way that they did.

Book Comparison

What do the two authors have in common?

The authors explained the importance of learning more about the community that you live in. In both books, the authors do not place the responsibility on the church, but as believers it is important to learn more about your neighbors. The authors also believe that the gospel can be translated to anyone from anywhere. A lot of Christians believe that mission work could only happen internationally. The authors give perspective on ways Christians could be Christ-like in their daily lives.

On what issues do the authors differ?

Chris Clayman and Meredith Lee, explained the importance of getting to know the different ethnic groups in New York City, and finding the best ways to serve them as Christians. The authors focused more on giving general information and ways for people to pray for them. Jay Pathak provided practical ways to build relationships with people that you do not know. As you build relationships, you will be able to learn more about their needs and find ways to best meet their needs. Pathak explained that the goal is not to convert to Christianity, but to be Christ representative to those that you live around.

Application

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

The authors encouraged Christians to go outside of their comfort zone. People come from different demographics, with a variety of experiences. Pathak emphasized that the only way to really get to know someone is through relationships. Many churches are driven by raising church attendance and memberships. This book encourages the leaders to focus more on leading a church to be more present in their community. The church could be a place to equip believers to be disciples to their neighbors, co-workers and to people that they encounter everyday. The work of the kingdom is not limited to church attendance. The greater goal is about preparing people to spread the gospel to all nations.

How could the authors' ideas impact your church?

The author's idea could impact my church to serve outside of the church walls. Community is built in my church through small groups. The small groups are dedicated to people that are already in the church. The pastors of my church could use these principles from the book to teach the members to build community outside of the church walls. The goal should not be to raise church attendance, because some people may never go to the church. People attend church once or twice a week. The ideas mentioned in these books are a daily practice.

References:

Clayman, C. and Lee, M. (2010) *Ethnycity: The nations, tongues, and Faiths of Metropolitan New York*. New York, NY: Metro New York Baptist Association.

Pathak, J. and Runyon, D. (2016) *The art of neighboring: Building genuine relationships right outside your door*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.