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Too Much Talk about Justice, Not Enough Action Says Antipoverty Activist Eugene Cho in New Book *OVERRATED*

Eugene Cho, pastor of Quest Church in Seattle, has a confession: “I like to talk about changing the world. I don’t really like to do what it takes.” If this is true of the man who founded the One Day’s Wages global antipoverty movement, then what must it take to act on one’s ideals? In his new book, *OVERRATED: Are We More In Love with the Idea of Changing the World Than Actually Changing the World?* (David C Cook, September 1, 2014, \$15.99 paperback), Cho shows that it is possible to move from talk to action.

Cho does not doubt the sincerity of those who want to change the world. But he fears that today’s wealth of resources and opportunities may be creating “the most overrated generation in history—we have access to so much, but end up doing so little.”

The “overrated generation” has an unrealistic and glamorous perception of what it means to follow Christ and pursue justice. They coast on idealistic talk about global issues, jump on the latest cause, and fixate on the feel-good image of a particular solution. With the clean water crisis, for example, the sexy solution is the water well, but as Cho points out, that’s “one option and when implemented, must always go hand in hand with education and training.”

Enjoying his own reputation as “an agent of change,” Cho came to see that he, too, was overrated. This book is my confession of wanting to change the world, but neglecting a posture of humility and awareness that I too must change,” he writes. “As Christians, our calling is not simply to change the world but to be changed ourselves.”

In Cho’s case, he was confronted with the reality of poverty while traveling internationally—learning, for example, that a teacher in Myanmar makes forty dollars *a year*. Cho and his wife, Minhee, knew then that they could not go back to life as usual. They founded One Day’s Wages, a movement to alleviate global poverty by asking people to give up what they earned for just one day’s work.

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With wisdom borne of experience and self-deprecating humor, Cho tells of his own misplaced zeal—for example, listing the family home for rent without telling his wife, in a last-ditch effort to come up with the one year’s salary they had committed to giving away. He learned an important lesson: “Don’t put up an ad on Craigslist to sublet your home without consulting your spouse.” Especially when it means the family is going to be couch-surfing for ten weeks.

Attempting to live out the requirements of justice and compassion is an ongoing challenge—Cho freely admits he likes material goods, whether his beloved Mazda Miata convertible “Blue Thunder,” or a new smartphone: “It’s not an easy admission for a pastor to make, apart from perhaps a prosperity gospel pastor, but I like my money. I like my stuff. I like upgrading things.”

Cho often hears from critics who say that as a pastor he should be focusing on Jesus, not justice. He argues that Jesus modeled justice in how he welcomed the marginalized. Christians should be following the “Jesus of downward mobility,” he says, who “proclaims God’s love for all people, especially those who have been forgotten in our society, and dare I say it, even in our churches. The Gospel lived out is not just about the four spiritual laws or lofty theology. Simply put, it is hope for those with no hope.”

EUGENE CHO is the founder of One Day’s Wages, a movement working to alleviate extreme global poverty. He is the founder and Senior Pastor of Quest Church, an urban, multicultural and multigenerational church in Seattle, Washington, where he lives with his family. Cho has been covered in various media including NPR, the *New York Times*, and *Seattle Times*. He blogs at eugenecho.com.

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*Overrated: Are We More In Love with the Idea of Changing the World
Than Actually Changing the World?*

by Eugene Cho

David C Cook

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