

1-1-2014

## Book Review: Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church by J.D. Payne

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### Recommended Citation

Zeller, S. (2014). Book Review: Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church by J.D. Payne. *Great Commission Research Journal*, 5(2), 283-285. Retrieved from <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/gcrj/vol5/iss2/13>

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Zeller: Book Review: *Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church* a quick reference guide for church structure and leadership can benefit from this book.

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Payne, J. D. *Pressure Points: Twelve Global Issues Shaping the Face of the Church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013.

Reviewed by Scott Zeller, residing in South Asia, student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Via the smartphone in the pockets of most who will read this review, access to near total knowledge of both history and current trends on a global level is accessible with the touch of a finger. Past generations would now marvel at the ease by which a Google search can answer any question and a tweet can summon news from any section of the globe. Under such an onslaught of information and awareness, a million meaningless distractions often overwhelm the truly important.

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J. D. Payne, pastor of church multiplication at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, has served believers well by sifting through the milieu of contemporary crises to highlight twelve key issues with which those engaging in world impact must grapple. The “big twelve” as he sees them are unreached people groups, the West as a mission field, growth of the Majority World church, pluralism and the plurality of faiths, international migration, globalization, poverty, growth of the cities, children and youth, health care, oral learners, and the pornification of societies.

Using the metaphor of “pressure”—a force that can “be both damaging and beneficial” (ix)—Payne points out that these issues can be productively engaged as opportunities to “innovate for the advancement of the gospel as the pressures of the age apply force and create challenges for the mission of the church” (xiv). The metaphor is effective and put to good use as Payne walks through each issue, focusing not on the problems it causes but on the opportunities it presents for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Payne recently transitioned to the role of pastor of church multiplication at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, having previously labored as a seminary professor. His scholar’s dedication to details is seen in the succinct yet engaging summary of each pressure point. The heart of the pastor then follows each one with an optimistic summons to action through gospel-centered, church-oriented connections. Each chapter follows this format with very accessible, almost casual prose. Payne leans heavily on first-person illustrations almost to a fault. He

Great Commission Research Journal, Vol. 5, Iss. 2 [2014], Art. 13 .  
employs the use of travelogues, news articles he happens upon in the morning's paper, and the dynamics of moving to Alabama. However, if one can envision the author as a classroom professor reading his notes of statistics and facts concerning the topic, and then looking up with a gleam in his eye to expound in a stream-of-conscious manner on the significance of said pressure point for the church, the vernacular of the book flows well.

In terms of the issues selected for highlighting, the informed reader will find few surprises. With little over 170 pages of text, Payne keeps a fast pace and aims more to raise the issues than to remedy them or explore new ones. The knowledge value of *Pressure Points* to the missions conversation is a well-crafted and brief curation of information, not a presentation of new information. An exception may be the final issue brought up of the "pornification of societies." While even Payne admits it was not originally on his list to write about, he makes a compelling case for the need to realize the sweeping impact of the age of pornography in which we live. Many will wish for more nuanced articulations of such complex issues, wonder why certain issues were not included, or desire more in terms of specifically how an issue finds connection to the church. However, these apparent shortcomings should prove to be strengths for the correct audience.

*Pressure Points* would serve very well as a text in an introductory missions course in an academic setting or in a missions-oriented study in a local church. Its readability and quick pace will keep all engaged, and the questions it leaves the reader with create opportunities for collaborative study. How could a class expand the chapter on health care (10) with globally-aware solutions for America's current crisis? How would a church missions team write an appendix discussing how the realities among children and youth (chapter 9) combine with the pornification of societies (chapter 12) to impact their teaching plan for the upcoming short-term trip to Kenya? What additional "pressure point" in their context would a local outreach team identify and write up in Payne's issue-opportunity format as a way to serve their neighborhood evangelistic strategy?

Moreover, this is not to say that the only benefit would be to the undergraduate or layperson. The seasoned mission practitioner is ever at risk of developing specialties, hobbyhorses, and blind spots. We must occasionally lift up our heads from whatever our area of ministry focus has become to again see that the challenges facing the church are numerous and important. Payne exhorts, "The interconnected world in which we now live has incredible opportunities for global disciple making, unlike those known to any previous generation" (85). To see the connections, the worker must first have in mind those defining issues creating them.

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Towards this goal of broader awareness, *Pressure Points* stands well in the

“current missions issues” genre, akin to Fritz Kling’s 2010 book *The Meeting of the Waters*, Michael Pocock and Gailyn Van Rheenen’s 2005 contribution to the “Encountering Mission” series titled *The Changing Face of World Mission*, and reaching back even further, John Stott’s *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*. These volumes not only serve as meaningful introductions to the issues for those first engaging in global discipleship, but also can serve as paradigm ballast to keep the veteran from slipping into ministry myopia. The unique value *Pressure Points* brings to the body of literature in this vein is in being an accessible summary with clear gospel-centered reminders throughout.

In terms of solutions presented, the reader seeking any new ideas will walk away disappointed. This is by design. Payne’s exhortations are consistently to “return to a radically biblical approach” to the pressure points of the day (21). In that, there is freshness to the book, as it offers no new solution; rather, it offers the reminder we all need: “Apart from abiding in Him, all of our strategies, methods, desires, and interests are worthless for the sake of the kingdom. Greater is He who is in us than are the pressure points of the world” (172). Payne combines this passion for biblical fidelity with clear calls to innovation (xi–xiv) and concludes the book with a well-written chapter of suggestions for how to move forward.

As hard-hitting as it is brief, *Pressure Points* offers a needed look at the high-level issues that are defining today’s mission landscape. By presenting the crises of the day with clarity and speaking of them as God-wrought opportunities for the gospel of Jesus Christ to shine through a faithful church, Payne has put in our hands a welcome tool for kingdom advancement.

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Gray, Stephen and Franklin Dumond. *Legacy Churches*. St. Charles: ChurchSmart, 2009. 115 pp. \$12.00.

Reviewed by Duane H. Boady. Duane is the senior pastor of Valley Mission Church of the Nazarene in Bedford, Indiana, and a D.Min. student at Talbot School of Theology.

Two seasoned pastors and church consultants collaborated on *Legacy Churches*. Stephen Gray has been a leading consultant for New Church Specialties and currently serves as the director of church planting for the western region of the Free Methodist Church. After thirty years in pastoral ministry, Franklin Dumond currently serves as director of congregational ministries for the General Association of General Baptists. This tandem of ministry-minded church leaders