



The Hunger Games and the Gospel (Study Guide Edition): Bread, Circuses, and the Kingdom of God

Julie Clawson

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In a globalized world full of uncertainty and injustice, Suzanne Collins' Hunger Games series has captured the imaginations of readers looking for glimmers of hope. The tale of Katniss Everdeen's journey of survival in the post-apocalyptic country of Panem, where bread and circuses distract the privileged and allow a totalitarian regime to oppress the masses, parallels situations in our world today. At the same time, the series' themes of resistance to oppression and hope for a better world, portrayed honestly as messy and difficult endeavors, echo the transformative way of life Jesus offered his followers.

The Hunger Games and the Gospel explores these themes in The Hunger Games series that have resonated so deeply with readers by examining their similarity to the good news found in Jesus' message about living in the ways of God's Kingdom. Taking the rich statements of the Beatitudes, which serve as mini-pictures of God's dreams realized on earth as in heaven, each chapter reflects on how those pictures are exhibited both in the narrative of The Hunger Games, and in Jesus' time, and then explores their significance for our own world. Thought-provoking questions provide direction for personal reflection and group discussion. Readers are invited to allow the inspiration of The Hunger Games help them live in the ways of the Kingdom of God by discovering how they too can work toward the possibility of a better world.

PRAISE FOR "THE HUNGER GAMES AND THE GOSPEL":

My favorite analysis of "The Hunger Games"... Clawson does a fantastic job of reminding readers that Collins' world of occupation, oppression, excess, and poverty is not so far removed from our own, and that it is exactly the kind of world in which Jesus himself lived.

-- Rachel Held Evans, author of "A Year of Biblical Womanhood"

It shouldn't surprise anyone that Julie Clawson finds everyday justice in the Hunger Games trilogy, but what may surprise and delight is that she reads the story so well and writes so beautifully about the lessons she finds there. Everyone who loves The Hunger Games should read this book.

-- Greg Garrett, author of "Faithful Citizenship," "One Fine Potion: The Literary Magic of Harry Potter," and "The Other Jesus"

Are we living in the United States of Panem? The Hunger Games trilogy's depiction of a wealthy, totalitarian regime that exploits its conquered neighbors is more than fiction. The series brings to life the Roman Empire of Jesus' day and suggests a searing indictment of contemporary American imperialism. Using a framing structure of the Beatitudes, Julie Clawson powerfully explores Katniss's suffering as a lens for understanding Jesus' passion for loving our neighbors and building a better world.

-- Jana Riess, author of "Flunking Sainthood" and "What Would Buffy Do?"

Julie Clawson writes with intelligence, thoughtfulness, and nuance. This is a collection of fascinating and insightful reflections, a set of mirrors that we as Christians must confront, even though they come to us from the unlikeliest of places: a story we've all read "for fun."

-- Shauna Niequist, Author of "Cold Tangerines" & "Bittersweet"

There is no question that the Hunger Games trilogy has touched something deep in the psyche of its millions of readers, stirring up questions and uncertainties that we all foster about our future. With sharp clarity and stunning insight, Julie Clawson helps us understand our visceral response to the series by interweaving the narrative with Jesus' Beatitudes. The result points to a realistic hope for today and tomorrow.

-- Jamie Arpin-Ricci, author of "The Cost of Community: Jesus, St. Francis & Life in the Kingdom"

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