

A review of Everyday Justice

By [Robert Cornwall](#)

October 8, 2009

Every decision we make is an ethical decision, which forces us to choose whether we will act out of love or end up denying the image of God in others.” This quotation sums up [CCblogger](#) Julie Clawson’s new book *Everyday Justice*. Whether it’s the coffee we drink, the chocolate or cheeseburger we eat or the clothes on our back, our everyday choices affect the lives of people living near and far from us. Because we often can’t see the consequences of our choices, we don’t pay much attention to them.

Books like this one tend to get under our skin and make us feel uncomfortable, especially when they bring to mind texts like [Matthew 25](#), which calls on us to attend to the needs of the “least of these.” But like the rich young ruler of [this week’s gospel lesson](#), we find it difficult to let go of the things that give pleasure to our lives.

There are alternatives out there—though yes, they may be more expensive and inconvenient. Clawson suggests taking it slow at first: make just a few changes here and there. Start with CFL light bulbs. Choose fair trade coffee, and maybe combine some shopping trips to save gas. Clawson calls this “ethical consumption,” the decision to apply “our moral values and ethical standards to our consumer habits.” We can start this process by becoming more aware of the situation, and this book is a good place to start. Its stories and information can help us make better decisions, and each chapter ends with a list of resources.

Why should we care about these things? The answer should be simple for Christians: because God does. As we hear this challenging word, Clawson offers some words of grace. First, don’t panic. Do, what you can, because even small changes, when taken together with the changes made by others, can make a big difference. Second, she encourages us not to try this alone but instead do it as a community. It is “within the strength and support of these relationships [the Holy Spirit and our communities of faith] that we serve.”

