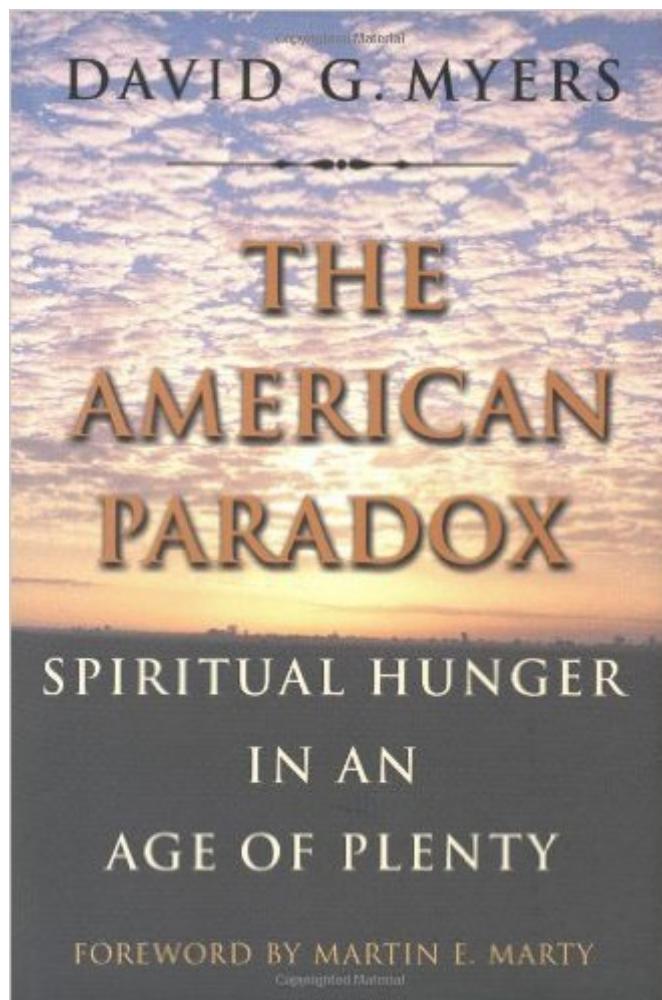


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The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger In An Age Of Plenty



Synopsis

For Americans entering the twenty-first century, it is the best of times and the worst of times. Material wealth is at record levels, yet disturbing social problems reflect a deep spiritual poverty. In this compelling book, well-known social psychologist David G. Myers asks how this paradox has come to be and, more importantly, how to spark social renewal and dream a new American dream. Myers explores the research on social ills from the 1960s through the 1990s and concludes that the materialism and radical individualism of this period have cost us dearly, imperiling our children, corroding general civility, and diminishing our happiness. However, in the voices of public figures and ordinary citizens he now hears a spirit of optimism. The national dialogue is shifting away from the expansion of personal rights and towards enhancement of communal civility, away from efforts to raise self-esteem and towards attempts to arouse social responsibility, away from "whose values?" and towards "our values". Myers analyses in detail the research on educational and other programmes that deal with social problems, explaining which seem to work and why. He then offers positive and well-reasoned advice, suggesting that a renewed social ecology for America will rest on policies that balance "me thinking" with "we thinking".

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To hold David G. Myers book "The American Paradox" in your hands, is truly to be holding the solution to America's problems. This is perhaps the most enlightening book you will ever read in this decade. The sheer fortitude that it took to sort through the facts and figures between the 1960's and

1990's and come to these brilliant conclusions is nothing short of extraordinary. Never has there been a more appropriate time to analyze our culture. This is a time of true spiritual hunger. If you want the reality of the situation you will find it here. Both self-described liberals and self-described conservatives will agree: There is no avoiding this deluge of facts. Perhaps now we can all have a common goal. "The American Paradox" offers a sober appraisal of this present predicament and (finally!) gives a vision of hope for the future. We soon learn that the problems are many: 1. The divorce rate has doubled and women and children are impacted the most. 2. The teen suicide rate has tripled. 3. Marriages may start with euphoria, but many end in separation, anguish and divorce. 4. Most cohabitations break up before marriage. 5. Material wealth is at record levels, yet happiness has diminished. 6. We have replaced communal activities with TV and Web surfing. 7. We have placed a lower value on self-sacrifice, sexual restraint and moral obligation. 8. We have educated our children, while overlooking the need to teach them character. 9. The media gives false images of reality, which in turn have affected our children's thoughts and actions. 10. The pursuit of pleasure may in fact be amplifying misery. We are also reminded that Gandhi once said that seven social sins could destroy a nation. I have the feeling we have committed far more. It seems we need to embrace principles which will enable us to realize "The New American Dream." This is a dream in which we encourage marriage, initiative, basic liberties, close relationships, empathy, self-discipline, character development, civility, fidelity, spiritual awareness, love for our fellow man, and a shared commitment to moral truth. David Myers has set out the intellectual facts and figures with insight and fairness. There are no sides to take, but rather you will experience a feeling of enlightenment, hope and a new sense of determination. To me it is clear that we need to reexamine our social policies, make the media more responsible, and decide to change ourselves. Above all, we should protect our freedom by becoming personally responsible and making our marriages and families the top priorities in our lives. It is really up to us to decide our future. Often prevention is easier than the cure. Building character takes time and effort, but the rewards are immense. Finally, I found a book my husband and I could read and discuss at length. What he said to me made perfect sense. When he plays softball everyone on the team has individual responsibilities yet they work as a collective whole to win the game. To me collectivism to its extreme is the political principle of centralized social and economic control, especially of all means of production. Individualism to its extreme is the belief that all actions are determined by, or at least take place for, the benefit of the individual, not of society as a whole. Individualism to its extreme could be said to be anarchy (a theory that regards the absence of all direct or coercive government as a political ideal and that proposes the cooperative and voluntary association of individuals and groups as the principal mode of organized

society). In my opinion, we need a basic set of rules to follow so we can respect one another. If we do not strike out as individuals we would simply be robots waiting for instructions. Clearly, there has to be a balance between personal responsibility and the responsibility we have to others. If we were all doing the job we were sent here to earth to do would not this world be a beautiful peaceful place? It is a delicate balance and somehow we have tipped the scale in the wrong direction. David's book tells us what has tipped this scale and takes us through a brilliant thought process to offer the solutions. Pope John Paul III said it with wisdom: "To educate without a value system based on truth is to abandon young people to moral confusion, personal insecurity, and easy manipulation. No country, not even the most powerful, can endure if it deprives its own children of this essential good." We must teach our children to read, to comprehend truth and to analyze what they are being told. Teach your children to think about issues which surround them now and in the future when they grow up they will thank you for it. I cannot thank my own parents enough for giving me security in my own beliefs and for giving me a head start in reading at a very young age. It is abundantly clear to me that America's parents will determine the future of our country. David G. Myers has built upon this thought, which I know many have wanted to voice but did not have a platform. I quote from his book: "We cannot expect our schools alone to restore the moral infrastructure. Character is nurtured by families and supportive neighbors, churches, kin, and child-friendly media." This vital guide will illuminate the dark path we are on. Hopefully, we will see the fork in the road and take the path to "The New American Dream." ~The Rebecca Review

I believe the title tells it all. In this time of enormous wealth, you would think people are donating more money to churches and charities, but they are giving even less. Wealth is at an all time high, but happiness and contentment are at historic lows. In the US we are so physically blessed but are nearing spiritual bankruptcy. We are unhappy at work, our marriages are falling apart and we walk aimlessly through life -- searching, searching, searching for "what's the meaning." This book aptly points out the real meaning has been there all along. Without a spiritual anchor, we'll continue to drift. I wish every American would read this book. Highly recommended for failing marriages: "The Romantic's Guide" by Michael Webb.

He pulls no punches. His Christian vision for society does not cloud his presentation of the current state of the union. Lots of helpful information for determining our social ills and strengths so as to focus ministry efforts.

Over all a good book, but what happened to religion? Author leaves it out as a factor, which is strange given the title of this volume includes "spiritual hunger" in it.

Love the book, you will learn a lot reading this book. The author is very detailed and writes about interesting topics.

I loved reading this book. There is so much useful information here on the fundamental shift in American culture toward individualism and away from social rules. Dr. Myers is also an amazing and engaging writer (there is a reason his textbooks are bestsellers). By the end of the book you will have a much better understanding of the paradox of the title: Why do we seem to have so much more, yet are not any happier? Dr. Myers has done a lot of research on happiness, and he shows how the things we now value (money) will not bring us as much happiness as the things we perhaps should value (marriage, children) and which have suffered in the last few decades. If you teach, you could make a great class (freshman writing seminar, or upper-level discussion class) on American culture with this book and other books on this intriguing topic like The Great Disruption, Bowling Alone, and Generation Me.

as described

This book just made me mad. Myers rounds up all of the usual suspects: divorce, pornography, the media, out of wedlock children, and tells us that our permissive, rights-oriented society is to blame. He hops on the Communitarian bandwagon without critical analysis of how one compels community and whether it would be worth the price. For example, he suggests, without a hint of analysis, that the 14th Amendment, rights of due process and equal protection, should trump First Amendment free speech. He hasn't a clue about how complex this argument is or where it would lead. Professor Myers claims impartiality as a "social scientist" when, in fact, the book skews the research to prove his point. Unfortunately, his "point" (our society is in the toilet - big surprise) doesn't lead anywhere.

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