

Jen Hatmaker details personal journey for justice

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SAN ANTONIO—Author and television personality Jen Hatmaker described her personal journey toward becoming an advocate for justice—beginning when she and her husband left their boots on a church altar as a gift to the homeless and walked barefooted to their car on a chilly Easter.

As keynote speaker for the inaugural Micah 6:8 Conference at Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, sponsored by Texas Baptists' Christian Life Commission, Hatmaker talked about her experiences advocating for the needs of others, from ministering to homeless in her own community to adopting two children from Ethiopia.



Jen Hatmaker speaks at the Micah 6:8 Conference in San Antonio. "Living a life on mission with God, loving the people he created with great care who are struggling, what I thought was

going to be an incredibly heavy task—and is sometimes—turns out to be such joy,” said Hatmaker, author of *For the Love: Fighting for Grace in a World of Impossible Standards*.

“It is upon us to walk faithfully behind (Jesus) in obedience and bring the good news to this broken, hurting world. If you are new to the justice conversation, when you begin to enter into spaces of injustice, committed to work alongside God to set things right—to make things fair and right and return dignity to those who have lost it—Jesus might just take you to people you have never considered before.”

Hatmaker advised advocates to treat justice work as a marathon, not a sprint. Too often, people passionate about justice issues can be overcome by compassion fatigue or burnout, she noted.

“Of all nonprofit workers in the U.S., roughly 80 percent of them have only been at it for five years or less,” she said. “There’s a culture that surrounds activism that is not healthy. Justice workers have an internal conflict about self-care.”

Rather than run on steam, Hatmaker encouraged Christians to find daily spiritual renewal from God, like manna from heaven that sustains God’s people one day at a time.

“We have to gather every day. That’s part of the rhythm of the gospel,” she said. “We need God’s fresh and daily nourishment in our real lives.”

Her husband, Brandon, pastor of Austin New Church, described the process of becoming learners again, seeking wisdom from God about how to move forward, extending mercy to others.

“The thing we are learning more and more, over and over is that together is how we should move forward,” he said. “We are not called to seek justice as individuals. We are not alone and should never be alone.”

As advocates the past 10 years, the Hatmakers have found many opportunities to minister to people in need. The couple described their work in community development in a village in Ethiopia, where their son was born. Both children they adopted were poverty orphans, and the Hatmakers decided to put their effort and energy behind development that would prevent further orphans in the region.

“We have since thrown our lot behind development, because we would love to prevent orphans in the first place,” she said. “We want to give them solid footing economically and physically. ... Asking why are people hungry, poor, is much more complicated to solve. We have to go back to those roots and systems, using every effort we have.”

About 400 people attended the Micah 6:8 Conference, which featured breakout sessions on topics including human trafficking, racial unity, immigration, mental health and community transformation.

“We held the Micah 6:8 Conference because we want to be a generation that serves the Lord by loving our neighbors and communities well,” said Kathryn Freeman, director of public policy for the Christian Life Commission.

“It is my hope that participants left San Antonio energized and refreshed so that they can go into their communities and live out the commands of Micah 6:8—to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God.”