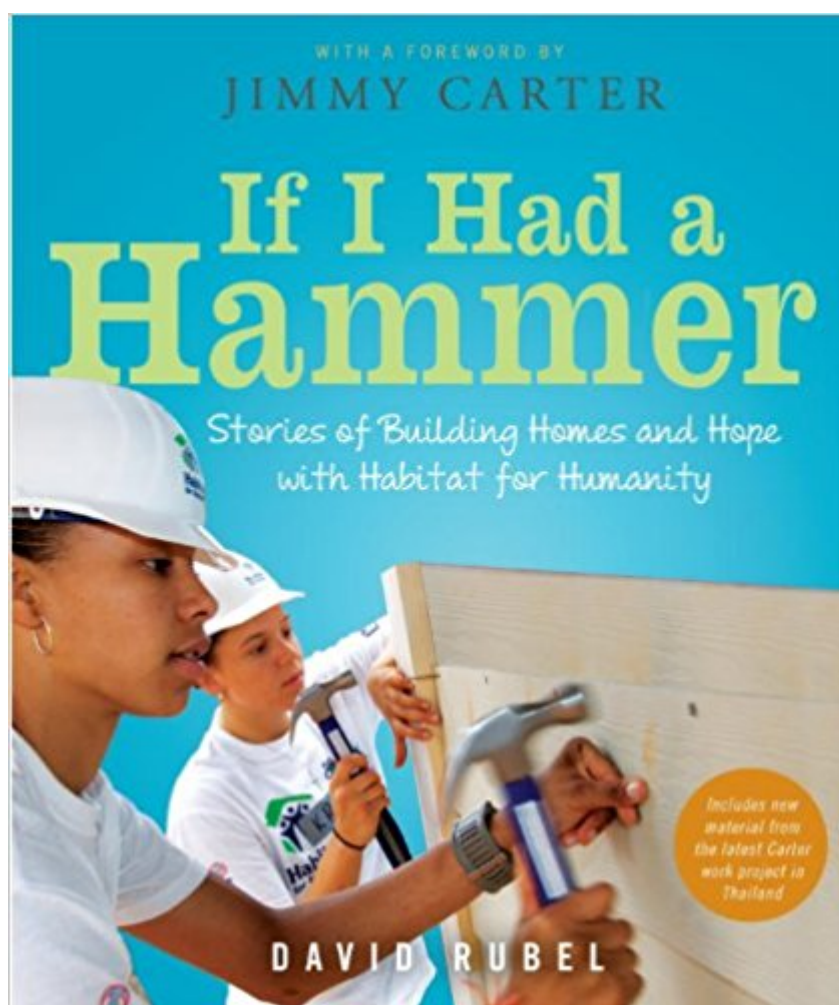




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# If I Had A Hammer: Stories Of Building Homes And Hope With Habitat For Humanity



## Synopsis

President Jimmy Carter's compelling anecdotes inspire a personal look at Habitat for Humanity that is sure to fire up a younger generation. For a quarter-century in more than ninety countries, Habitat for Humanity has built homes in partnership with the people who need them, aided by more than a million multigenerational volunteers. Two of the most devoted are former president Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn. Now this captivating account, abundantly illustrated with photos, relays personal stories from volunteers and new homeowners with special resonance for young readers. Exploring everything from creative home design to the emotional rewards of helping to build a house from the ground up, this is an essential resource for inspiring future youth volunteers. Included in the paperback edition is a riveting account of building a neighborhood in Thailand for the 2009 Jimmy and Rosalynn Work Project

## Book Information

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Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Technology and faith are the subjects in this hands-on account of Habitat for Humanity, the organization that helps create safe, decent housing for those in need in the U.S. and across the globe. Starting with his eloquent foreword, former President Jimmy Carter talks throughout the book about how, inspired by his Christian faith, he is committed to Habitat's work ethic, which

stipulates that the poor are not given a handout but a handup. As part of the program, rich and poor people build homes together, and volunteers cover their own costs. The book's open design, with clear type on thick, quality paper, includes many color photos of people living in poverty, from Durban, South Africa, to Berea, Kentucky. Also included are close-up images of volunteers and residents installing roofs, painting windows, and completing new homes. The text details about the essentials of providing shelter, fresh water, electricity, and effective sewage systems for all combine into a powerful message that will inspire many readers, including adults. Grades 6-12. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"You have it in your power to ease suffering. Do it. You will be surprised how happy it makes you." Ann Curry, NBC News • Quote "This is an inspiring book, telling how ideas starting on a little farm in Georgia have grown to a worldwide movement bringing people together. How? Read it." Pete Seeger, American folk singer and co-writer of the song, "If I Had a Hammer." • Quote

Wanted to show students other options for livelihood. Thanks.

What a nice book to inspire our young mission workers who headed off to Tennessee this summer to work on some homes for Habitat for Humanity! Easy to read vignettes and colorful photos plus Jimmy Carter's inspirational words make it a wonderful accompaniment to service projects of all types.

It was a treat to read this compelling account of Habitat for Humanity's work - very heartening to gain an update of all Habitat has accomplished since its founding in 1976, all the homes built, lives changed around the globe by the spirit of volunteerism - "the hand up," versus "hand out" approach that is Habitat for Humanity. The numerous stories and photographs paint the picture well. The enthusiasm of the repeat volunteers, including Jimmy Carter, who penned the Foreword, is infectious. The book is well written and succinctly organized. I particularly enjoyed reading about Habitat's history; its tie to the doctrine of Koinonia Farm, an experimental Christian Community started in 1942 in Americus, Georgia, "to test the social theories of its principal founder, Clarence Jordan" that "nothing mattered more than...loving all people and caring for the poor." President Carter's message that "the secret that so many other Habitat volunteers have learned: (is) that you

get much more out of the work than you put in" is powerful indeed - and timely - and a wonderful gift to receive and to pass on to others!

A few years ago, one of my radio show guests was a representative from Habitat for Humanity . . . I was impressed by both what he had to say and the organization and now am even more so after reading *IF I HAD A HAMMER* (see also Section 11) by David Rubel. This it seems the book was originally written for younger readers, I think it can be enjoyed by individuals of any age . . . what I found particularly interesting was the fact that Habitat for Humanity does much good for the entire world--and not just this country. In addition, I was touched by the experiences of both the volunteers and those who had homes built--such as this one:\* Sherwood and Marsha's experience illustrates a point that Danielle Weir makes about interacting with people in need. "Something I learned when I was young and have relearned in my nonprofit work is the importance of inviting the poor to a sense of dignity," Danielle says. "Habitat does that by inviting people to participate in the building of their own home. It'd certainly be easier to have professional builders do all the work and not get involved with homeowners and volunteers, but Habitat is about more than just the physical outcome. It's about the process, and part of that process is creating dignity in the lives of the partner families. Another part is having everyday people come out to help. All of it is connected." I also liked how the author shared some of the background that led to the success of Habitat for Humanity:\* Fuller's first move after the conference was to open a headquarters for Habitat in the back room of his new law office in Americus. At the same time, he returned to one of the core principles that he had learned from Clarence Jordan: The "haves" and the "have-nots" of the world are bound together. According to Jordan, the rich and the poor need each other. The poor need resources, such as money, in order to improve their lives; and the rich need a connection to God and other people, which their money can't buy. For this reason, Jordan saw the Fund for Humanity as an effective and dignified way to bring rich and poor together for the benefit of both. As Jordan once wrote, "What the poor need is not charity but capital, not caseworkers but coworkers. And what the rich need is a wise, honorable, and just way of divesting themselves of their overabundance." The book even got me thinking, particularly this tidbit from the foreword by Jimmy Carter:\* We affluent Americans frequently fail to realize that these things are missing from the lives of many people, not only around the world but also here in our own country. When the new millennium began in 2000, I was asked to make a few speeches in different places around the world about the greatest challenge facing humanity. It didn't take me long to identify what that challenge was: the growing separation between rich and poor. Did you know that in the year 1900, the people who lived in the world's ten richest

countries were, on average, about nine times richer than the people who lived in the world's ten poorest countries? That doesn't seem like a lot, but as time passed, the gap widened. By 1960, the world's richest people were thirty times wealthier than the world's poorest people, and today the world's richest people are more than seventy-five times more wealthy! Lastly, several photos from around the world added to my enjoyment of IF I HAD A HAMMER.

Many people have heard of Habitat for Humanity and might have even worked on one of their projects, but may not be familiar with its history and what actually goes on behind the scenes. The basic mission of this organization is to "rid the world of substandard, or poverty housing" and improve the lives of individuals so "that they can not just survive but thrive in the world. In this book you will learn about people like Warren Fuller whose dream life turned into a nightmare because he was so obsessed with his business and making money that he didn't notice his marriage was falling apart. When Warren gave away all his money and began anew he started seeing the needs of other people, including the need for decent housing. You'll learn about him and another man named Clarence Jordan who claimed that building homes for others was a "dignified way to bring rich and poor together for the benefit of both." Complexes such as the Mascot Flats building along with individual homes have enriched the lives of many. You'll meet the recipients of these homes like Debbie Kinder as they share their stories, you'll learn how many hours of sweat equity are required of the home owners, you'll learn how the houses are designed, how designs change with individual or cultural needs, you'll meet the volunteers, you'll learn about "blitz" building, and much more! For those who know a lot about Habitat for Humanity, this book may not have much to offer them. For others this text is an excellent introduction to this organization. It is a leisurely, interesting read and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I have worked on the construction of one house, but never really knew a great deal about Habitat and was very pleased to be reintroduced to its principles. This book, designed with the young adult reader in mind, just might plant a few ideas in their minds. With "more than 1.1 billion people worldwide [living] in inadequate housing" there is a lot of work to be done!

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