

# From #1 Bestseller to the Tenderloin: Alexander Debelov and Stefania Leão Give Away Books to San Francisco's Unhoused

*The co-authors of a #1 bestseller are walking America's most visible homelessness crisis with food, water, and a book, and something unexpected keeps happening.*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, August 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This summer, "[The Prayer: Rise with Jesus](#)" reached #1 on Amazon in three languages and won three international book awards. But the two people behind it, Forbes 30 Under 30 entrepreneur [Alexander Debelov](#) and Brazilian bestselling author [Stefania Leão](#), are spending most of their attention a few blocks from their office, in San Francisco's Tenderloin, where they are personally handing out hundreds of free copies of the book alongside food and water to neighbors experiencing homelessness. What they have found there is not what they expected to find.

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People are choosing the book over the pizza. You can watch a woman stop in the middle of the street to read it while cars go around her. It is food for the soul.”

*Alexander Debelov*

They expected the food and the water to be the main draw. They were wrong. On block after block, the book is what people reach for first. One woman stopped in the middle of the street to read it. Traffic simply went around her. It has happened more than once.

"We thought we were bringing pizza and bottled water, and the book was a bonus. It turned out the opposite. People in the Tenderloin are choosing the book over everything else. You can literally see them stop in the middle of the sidewalk, sometimes in the middle of the street, to read it. That is when we understood. This is food for the soul, and they were starving for it far more than they were starving for a meal," says Alexander Debelov, co-author, illustrator, and publisher of the devotional.

"There is a kind of light that lands on people who have not been offered much light lately. It is not us, and it is not the book. It is the Holy Spirit meeting a person where they are, and they can feel it before they can name it. What people in the Tenderloin need most, more than anything we can hand them, is hope, and belief that they still matter," says Stefania Leão, co-author of the devotional, who wrote the book alone in 2022 during what she calls the hardest year of her life.

Debelov and Leão are not running a 501(c)(3), a foundation, or an NGO. They walk the sidewalks of the Tenderloin themselves. They print the copies. They carry them in bags. They put a book, a meal, and a bottle of water into a person's hands on the block, look them in the eye, and move on to the next. Neither takes a cent from the book. Every dollar of royalties is redirected: it prints free copies and buys the food and water. When a reader anywhere in the world buys a copy, they are quietly paying for a stranger on a Tenderloin sidewalk to receive one for free.

"Day one. Before the book was ever printed, we agreed every dollar goes back out. I run Go X for a living. Stefania is a social media influencer and an e-commerce entrepreneur. The book gets to be the book. When you see the effect a short reflection can have on another human being, the idea of turning any of it into personal income becomes kind of absurd," says Debelov.

The scale so far is measured in hundreds. Debelov and Leão say that is the beginning, not the ambition.

"Right now we are giving out hundreds of books. The goal is millions. We want this book in the hands of every person experiencing homelessness in this country who wants one. People in darkness need the light the most, and this book has genuinely done that for them. We are not going to stop at hundreds," says Debelov.

"The Prayer: Rise with Jesus" is 30 short reflections, written by a woman rather than by the usual voices in the space, in a season when the author herself needed the book she was writing. It is available in six languages. Neither author takes personal income from it.

Photos and video from the Tenderloin outreach, including footage of a neighbor reading in the middle of the sidewalk, are documented at [readtheprayer.com/press](http://readtheprayer.com/press). Review copies, high-resolution assets, and interviews with both authors are available on request.

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Stefania Leao with a neighbor during the outreach drive

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