

Doing Good Without Giving Up: Sustaining Social Action in a World That's Hard to Change
Available October 2014
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Change in an Unchanging World

Doing Good Without Giving Up, a new book by Ben Lowe, aims to inspire and equip American Christians to live out our faith in a crumbling public square. Revealing the deeply broken aspects of both our Christian witness and the public square itself, Lowe shares how ordinary Christians can stand up to the status quo and be part of a renewed and more faithful presence. This is not just a book about politics; it's a book about our public faith as ordinary Christians.

Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners, writes "As followers of Jesus, we are called to seek social justice and the common good – in short, to change the world. Few young leaders have done as much or worked as hard toward this goal as Ben Lowe has. In his inspirational and thought-provoking book *Doing Good Without Giving Up*, Ben shows us how to faithfully pursue social justice without losing heart when the change we seek doesn't happen as quickly or as easily as we might hope. Anyone who seeks to change the world for the better should read this book. A new generation of faith leaders like Ben Lowe gives me real hope."

Throughout the book, Lowe examines questions like:

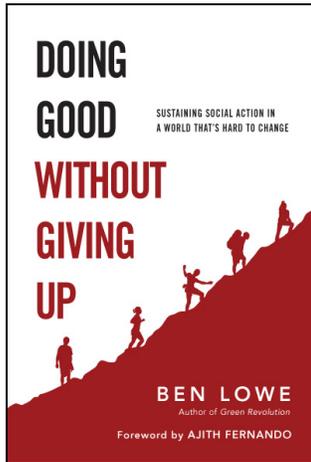
- How can we sustain activism when the world seems unchangeable?
- Why are passionate Christ-followers becoming disengaged with their work in large numbers?
- How can we overcome discouragement when resources are so limited, needs are so great and opposition is so strong?
- What practices work well for renewing a mission for social activism?
- What personal experience do you have with defeat and perseverance in your activism walk?
- What does it mean when you write that Christians are called to faithfulness, not effectiveness? How should this play out in our engagement with social action?
- Are professional activists the only ones called to create change in our world?
- What should people passionate for activism do once the "honeymoon phase" wears off?
- You write that millennials are particularly bad at seeing change as something beyond a fad or a hobby. What systemic things can we do to change this viewpoint?
- Why do love and prophecy go hand-in-hand when trying to motivate change in our churches?
- What does faithful social action look like today?

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“Unleash Your Inner Jeremiah”

The campaign was not going well as the primary election approached. And I wasn't even facing a competitor until the general election. Yet our core team was burning out, fundraising was faltering and internal party opposition to my candidacy persisted. In short, very little was going according to plan. Struggling to fit in as a candidate and to juggle all that I needed to know with all the people I needed to win over, I grew increasingly isolated and discouraged.

As the familiar and lonely weight of depression set in, I began questioning whether I had misread the signs that led me to such an unlikely grassroots candidacy in the first place. Or maybe this was as far as I was meant to come and it was time to drop out of the race. Perhaps I could just quit political activism altogether.

I felt stuck and didn't know what to do or where to turn.

It was during this low point that I received an unexpected package from a prominent progressive blogger in the district. This widely read online activist – who is also openly gay and agnostic – had become an unlikely ally early on in the campaign. There were, after all, plenty of reasons for him to be suspicious of an outspoken evangelical candidate and political rookie coming out of Wheaton College, with its reputation as a bastion of conservative Christianity. But he refused to write me off and eventually became a good friend and one of my strongest supporters.

Opening the package later that night, I found a copy of *Romero*, a film about the life of Oscar Romero, the archbishop of San Salvador from 1977 to 1980. Oscar Romero was a reluctant prophet who lived a relatively quiet and studious life before unexpectedly being appointed archbishop. But his commitment to the gospel meant that he could not stay silent in the face of the widespread injustice and horrific suffering taking place in El Salvador. Archbishop Romero began to preach peacefully but prophetically in support of human rights and against the oppression of the Salvadoran poor. And for that he was martyred. On March 24, 1980, government agents assassinated Romero as he was celebrating the Eucharist rite in a small hospital chapel.

No one was trying to kill me, and the United States is not El Salvador in the 1980s. Nonetheless, our society and politics is very much riddled with injustice and class warfare, and we perpetuate oppression at home and abroad, whether we're talking about the poor trapped in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina roared through, or the many US-friendly dictators we've been actively propping up in the Middle East and Latin America. (Shortly before he was killed, Archbishop Romero actually wrote a letter to President Jimmy Carter pleading with him – to no avail – to stop shipping weapons to the Salvadoran government

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BOOK EXCERPT



Ben Lowe has dedicated his life to promoting faithful discipleship within the church and a more authentic witness within society. He is on staff with the Evangelical Environmental Network, serves as the national spokesperson for Young Evangelicals for Climate Action and is a regular columnist for *Relevant*. A dedicated activist, advocate and organizer, Ben was raised as a missionary kid in Southeast Asia and now lives as part of an intentional community in a refugee and immigrant neighborhood outside Chicago, where he ran for US Congress in 2010. He is a graduate of Wheaton College and author of *Green Revolution*.

because they were only being used against their own people.)

Accompanying the copy of *Romero*, my agnostic blogger friend included a short note: “You need to unleash your inner Jeremiah. Prophecy is called for today.”

He was right. I realized that God was speaking prophetically through him in order to get my attention. Like many campaigns, our team had begun to play it safe in order to increase our admittedly slim chances of winning. But faithful political activism—at a time of crumbling climate negotiations, protracted wars, bleak economic struggles and increasingly toxic health care debate—was not about playing it safe. And it still isn’t today.

— Taken from chapter eight, “Prophecy”