

10 DAYS WITHOUT



DARING ADVENTURES IN DISCOMFORT
THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR WORLD AND YOU

DANIEL RYAN DAY

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MULTNOMAH
BOOKS

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My one- and three-year-old boys have prayed for this book every day for the past two years. Every night before bed they asked God, "Help Daddy write his book. Give him strength. Give him wisdom."

*To thank my boys, I asked them to write the dedication for this book:
"Noah and Finley, what should Daddy write as the dedication for the book?"*

"What's a dedication?" Noah asked.

"A dedication is where I mention a few special people in the front of the book."

Noah pondered this for a moment and then responded:

"Say: 'To Noah. Happy birthday. I love carrots, and I love racing.'"

"Okay. Finley, what do you want me to write?"

"Raisins. Strawberries."



Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

MATTHEW 25:34–36

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Introduction

Those of us who live in the Western world live in a culture of excess.

Turn on the TV, and you see it. Pick up a popular magazine, and you see it. Eavesdrop on conversations at a coffee shop, watch people at the local mall, examine social media posts from your favorite celebrity—the examples go on and on.

Most of us have never experienced true need, genuine poverty, or authentically painful hunger. Our needs are met. Many of our wants are satisfied too.

And as a follower of Christ, this has bothered me more and more as I've gotten older. Do society's priorities match what Jesus wants us to desire and obtain? Would Jesus be pleased with our culture of excess? With all of our wealth and stuff, can't we do more to help people less fortunate in this country and in developing nations around the world?

As Christians, it seems like we're called to live differently; but how can we amid all the excess of our culture?

These kinds of questions haven't always concerned me. I wasn't the kid who gave away all his toys to needy families or the high school guy who ate only stale bread to draw attention to global issues. I grew up in a Christian home, attended a Christian school, and was involved in church, but I always felt as if my life

was meant for something more. I wanted to honor God by loving him and loving others, but I didn't know how to make a difference.

Then I came up with the idea of Ten Days Without. This is the story of how I abandoned certain “necessities” as a way to increase awareness and raise money for amazing organizations that were doing good things to help others. It was my way of saying enough is enough—it's time to stop talking and time to start doing.

But it's more than just my journey; it can be yours too. I'm no expert in solving world problems. I'm still trying to figure things out. I've simply tried something that has worked for me and for many other people (you'll read some of their stories along the way). I started a blog, did some crazy experiments, opened up my life and experiences to the world, and shared honestly about my struggle to make an impact for God.

Maybe you're dissatisfied too. Maybe you know that you're destined to be more than just another shopper at the mall and another consumer of all the latest gadgets. Maybe in the midst of excess, you can chart a different path that makes God smile and has a lasting impact on people's lives.

If you're ready for an adventure that will challenge you, stretch you, and surprise you, then keep reading. The stories you'll encounter are real. More importantly, so is the change I—and many other people—have experienced by simply going Ten Days Without.

What Is Ten Days Without?

- ➤ ➤ So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

JAMES 2:17, NLT

Sometimes asking one little question can turn your world upside down.

“What if making a difference in the world is as easy as walking into a business meeting without shoes?” I asked my wife on a warm fall day three years ago.

She and I had been sitting on our living room floor laughing about a goofy image: a guy walking into a high-powered meeting in New York City, wearing an expensive suit but no shoes. Blame the caffeine rush. Or a series of sleep-deprived nights.

She asked me to explain what I meant.

“I feel like my life is all about me and not about God,” I said. “Yeah, I work for a ministry, but I feel like all I’m doing is marketing. I’m writing e-mails. Updating websites. Designing brochures. But I don’t feel close to God. I don’t feel like my life is making a difference. It’s like I’m caught in some sort of vicious cycle that keeps me from growing closer to God or making an impact in issues that matter. How does my little marketing job make a

difference in the big issues like poverty or human trafficking? How does my life help people see God?”

“Okay, but how would walking into a business meeting barefoot fight those kinds of issues?”

Good question. I paused to consider how it *would* make a difference.

“Well, if I walked around barefoot in places where people normally wear shoes, don’t you think they would notice and want to know what I was doing? It would spark some amazing conversations! I could give up wearing shoes for a set period of time. Every day I’d write about the experience on a blog and connect it with a real-world issue and an organization that fights that problem. And then I could challenge people to get involved with that organization.”

“Do you think that would make a huge difference?”

“Well, I’d be raising money and awareness for an organization that provides shoes for kids who don’t have any, so children around the world would get a pair of shoes. Yeah, I think it would make a difference!” I started to get excited about this seemingly ridiculous idea.

“Okay, but for how long would you give up shoes?” she asked.

“I don’t know. Forty days is all over the place in the Bible. That seems like a spiritual number.”

“You want to give up wearing shoes for *forty* days? How about you do it for a week?”

“But that seems too short,” I said.

“What about ten days?”

“Perfect!”

And that's how Ten Days Without was born.

The next day, before anyone could douse the flames of this crazy idea with a cold bucket of reality, I created a blog, and within a week I had started the Ten Days Without Shoes experiment. When I call it an experiment, I'm not exaggerating. I didn't have time to think about whether it was a good idea or not. It was just an idea, and with the support of the ministry I work for, I went for it.

And the response amazed me. My newly launched blog (10dayswithout.com) received over two thousand views in the first month, so I kept going. What else could I go without? Soon I went ten days without furniture, legs, media, a coat, waste, speech, human touch—each experiment a response to a need that I cared about.

But this is where things get really exciting: along the way, I realized that other people could join the cause. I didn't have to be the only one going ten days without—teenagers and young adults and parents and pastors and all kinds of other people could do similar experiments to inform and engage the people in *their* world.

And when I say *they*, I really mean *you*! This whole adventure is all about you: how your life can be absurdly altered for God, how your ten-day sacrifice can help people see God, how this challenge can help you grow closer to God as you experience for a few days what some people in this world experience every day.

If you say yes to Ten Days Without, you're saying yes to going ten days without something—maybe something I went ten days without or maybe something particular to your life, your community, your passion. If you're a youth worker or leader, it

means engaging a group of teenagers or young adults in this adventure and encouraging them to take ownership of this exciting opportunity.

We'll dive into the details a little bit later, and you can learn more on the special website we've created for this book, 10dayswithout.com. But it's my hope and prayer that as you continue to read about my experiments, you will be challenged to join the journey. If you do, your life will never be the same.

THE POWER OF GOING WITHOUT

A youth group in Iowa decided to do several challenges with me. One student, an amazing guy named Justin, went all out. He did the experiments, blogged about them, and posted his blogs on Facebook to challenge other people.

One of the challenges Justin completed was Ten Days Without Speech—he didn't use his voice for ten days. Many people would struggle to go ten minutes without speaking! When he began his journey, he got a little bit of resistance from a Facebook friend who challenged Justin by asking, "Not using your voice is great, but wouldn't it be better to use your voice and tell people what you are doing?"

His friend had a point, but in this case I think the best answer is no. We live in a noisy world, where people constantly bombard us with words and messages. They want us to support a candidate or buy a product or boycott a store or read their deepest, darkest secrets through their favorite social media platform. Those moments happen so often that we can become adept at turning them

down. We “listen” without “listening.” (Sounds like what our parents said we did in elementary school, right?)

So how can we raise awareness for an important cause within such a loud environment? Clearly we need a *countercultural way* of grabbing people’s attention. And what could be more countercultural than going without? I’ve identified three specific, powerful results from going without: you put your beliefs and faith into action, you move beyond “slacktivism,” and you dispel the culture’s myths.

Let’s explore each of these.

You Put Your Beliefs and Faith into Action

Once upon a time, I was addicted to good intentions. It may not sound like a risky addiction, but it has some nasty side effects. Apathy. Procrastination. Cynicism.

My life was full of good intentions—those things we write down in journals and share with friends or family, the important ideas that make us feel good about ourselves, the things we know we’re “supposed” to do as followers of Christ. But for too many of us, our good intentions never become good actions. Without action, good intentions don’t move us forward, draw us closer to God, or make a difference in the world. Good intentions are cans of paint that could have become amazing works of art—but never did. (If you want to see a video about good intentions, visit 10dayswithout.com and click on “Videos.”)

I enjoyed sitting with friends and talking about problems that we saw in the church or the world. But for some reason, I was a lot better at *talking* about problems than *doing* anything about them.

I would end up getting too busy or too distracted, or I just wouldn't care enough.

And I had a feeling that I was not alone. Maybe this perfectly describes your life too.

I wanted to turn my “ideas that could have meant something” into “actions that mean something.” I was tired of just saying that I follow Jesus. I wanted to actually live it—to serve God with my life.

Of course, the thought of serving God can be scary. I mean, what if God calls you to a life of serving society's outcasts? What if God asks you to sell all of your possessions and give them to the poor? What if God sends you to a foreign, distant land—like Texas? (Just kidding, my Texan friends.) I think that's why I had avoided asking God where he wanted me to serve: I was scared of what he would say.

Because I had gotten stuck in fear before and stayed stuck for a long time, I wanted this time to be different. So for the first time in my life, I put away my need to figure everything out and decided to just try something—to experience something by living it. Risky move, right?

We often need to *feel* something to *believe* it. It's one thing to watch a video about a horrible problem in the world, such as poverty. It's another thing to not use your furniture for ten days so that you can experience what it's like to sleep on a hard floor without a mattress. It's one thing to sit around a coffee shop with friends and talk about the problem of homelessness. It's an entirely different thing to take a homeless guy out to eat—so that's exactly what I did (but that story comes in the Ten Days Without a Coat chapter).

The experiences of Ten Days Without caused me to become more aware and more motivated, and I believe the same thing will happen in your life.

You Move Beyond Slacktivism

I also wanted to make sure that I was not falling into the trap of slacktivism.

Ever heard of “slacktivism”? The term is a mix between *slacker* and *activism*. It’s when you text ten bucks to the Red Cross for people affected by a deadly hurricane—while you’re watching your favorite reality show from the comfort of your home. It’s when you see a compelling viral video and then e-mail it to your friends or share it on social media—and feel better because you have “done something.” It’s when you connect with a really good cause by “liking” a fan page. It’s the idea that you have somehow contributed to the greater good without actually doing anything.

In a way, slacktivism is better than doing nothing at all. But the subtle danger of slacktivism is that we can check “doing good” off our spiritual or global citizen checklists—or feel like we are involved with a serious problem in the world—without any life change or real commitment or genuine sacrifice.

I realize some people could argue that Ten Days Without is a new form of slacktivism. After “ten days of suffering without shoes on our carpeted floors,” we somehow feel like we are done. We’ve put in our time to making the world a better place. We’ve fought poverty head-on, and we can go back to our normal lives again. But after doing so many different Ten Days Without experiments, I don’t think that’s possible.

When your heart, mind, soul, and strength work together for a cause, your life will change. Ten Days Without is built on the premise that it's better to get out of the coffee shop and do something, even if we don't have it all figured out. It's where our good intentions end and making a difference begins.

You Dispel the Culture's Myths

Our consumer culture is built on two basic myths: newer and bigger are always better, and wealth equals happiness. The best way to respond to these myths is to rebel. Yep, you read those words correctly. It's time for a little God-honoring rebellion.

Think of it as a personal insurrection of sorts, a rebellion against a culture that is always preaching "more" and "with." Going without is a way to experience change in our lives. And it's a way of learning humility.

During my time without shoes, one night my wife and I went out to eat before catching a movie. As we walked up to the restaurant, I noticed that my wife, who was also without shoes, was hesitant about going inside.

"What's up, babe?" I asked.

She looked at me with a nervous smile and whispered, "I feel like I am wearing my feet on my head!"

It's awkward to break social norms and go against everything that we are taught in our Western culture. But as we sacrifice these small, silly things, we are open to change in ways that we would never have been otherwise.

Here's how I look at it: this is similar to the spiritual discipline of fasting from food. (Yeah, I'm not always a big fan of that word

discipline either—or of missing meals!) Fasting says, “Feel the pain of hunger, and it will remind you to pray or meditate on Scripture more.” Ten Days Without says, “Feel the discomfort so that you can care and give more.” Sometimes the pain is physical (hot asphalt on bare feet) and sometimes it’s emotional (getting stared at or laughed at); but either way, it helps you think about these causes in a new light.

IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Does sacrificing a “necessity” really make a difference? You bet it does—even if it doesn’t always *feel* like it. Poverty, environmentalism, hunger, disabilities, spiritual compromise, homelessness, and modern-day slavery are all complex issues that affect millions of people in this world. You won’t find an easy fix (tough for us to acknowledge because of our microwave mentality and fast-food fanaticism), and each issue can feel overwhelming. But taking a step and doing something make a difference—in *you* and in *other people* who now have coats or shoes or other necessities they didn’t have otherwise.

Here are three specific ways you make a difference when you go Ten Days Without.

You Influence the People Around You

Whether you realize it or not, you have a personal platform. That is, every day you influence a lot of people: friends, family members, classmates, coworkers, teachers, bosses, social media contacts—the list goes on. (Don’t worry—I’m not saying you should feel

paranoid; just be aware!) Your influence, either for good or for bad, has the greatest impact on those closest to you. Many of them genuinely care about your thoughts or opinions on certain issues or topics, so seize the opportunity. Ten Days Without is all about inspiring others to pursue and support the things God cares about and to oppose and resist the things God hates. (And sometimes an experiment like this will move past your personal platform and end up on the news. That happened to me twice. But I will talk about that more in the Ten Days Without a Coat chapter.)

God cares about the different causes you'll read about in this book. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus talked about feeding the hungry, giving drinks to the thirsty, welcoming in the stranger, clothing the naked, taking care of the sick, and visiting the prisoner. In James, we read about the value of caring for the orphan and the widow. These are exactly the people you can assist in your own Ten Days Without challenges.

You Can Raise Money for Worthwhile Organizations

Doing these challenges also makes a difference because you can raise money or resources for ministries, organizations, and people serving on the front lines of these issues. Doing Ten Days Without Speech allowed me to raise funds for International Justice Mission to aid in their efforts to rescue girls from the commercial sex trade. My Ten Days Without a Coat experiment led to dozens of local homeless people receiving coats for the winter.

For each experiment, I partnered with a strategic organization responding to a specific problem. The way I raised funds for these organizations varied, but I'll go into more detail in each chapter.

I have put on my website a list of amazing organizations that fight poverty, homelessness, slavery, disease, and many more issues.¹ You'll also learn a lot more about these organizations as you read through this book. Obviously, you are welcome to support the same organizations I used, but I also encourage you to partner with your own church or other organizations that you know are trustworthy and making a difference.

You Create Lifelong Awareness and Action

If you walk around without shoes, show up at school or work in a wheelchair, stop talking, or ask others not to touch you, people will notice. They will want to know what's going on and why you're doing what you're doing. Even if their only response is looking at you weirdly, you still will have given them food for thought.

When I stopped speaking for ten days, I carried a whiteboard around with me as a way to communicate with people. At the top of the board I wrote, "I'm not using my voice to be a voice for..." followed by a statistic about people enslaved around the world. On the day I wrote, "Two million children stuck in the commercial slave trade,"² I encountered a barista at a coffee shop who thought the experiment was interesting but clearly didn't know how to respond. (Can you blame her?) After I got my coffee and sat down at a table, I thought about what would happen next.

Most likely she turned to a coworker and discussed how weird I was. But perhaps the conversation kept going, and they talked about the message on the board: that there are two million children around the world stuck in the commercial sex trade. And maybe one or both of them looked on the Internet later to see if

my facts were true—and how they could get involved in combating the problem.

(Along these lines, I encourage you to carry around some small cards to hand out that explain the cause and what you hope to accomplish. There is more on this in chapters 2 and 5.)

When you do something different, people notice. Each of the Ten Days Without challenges creates an opportunity to make other people think about and remember the cause for a long time—and, we hope, take action and make a difference.

But just as importantly, this adventure can create lifelong awareness in *you*! I don't respond the same way when I see someone asking for change on the side of the road—I feel a sense of compassion that wasn't there before. My heart is genuinely stirred when I see those TV commercials about starving children in third-world nations because I realize the money I frivolously spend on lattes each week could help one of those kids eat better, live better, and survive. I sometimes intentionally go silent for an hour or two, just to remind myself of those children stuck in the commercial slave trade.

This is my genuine prayer for you: I want you to see the world differently after you do one or two or a dozen challenges. But don't just be aware—act! I'm reminded of something I've heard from many pastors who've taken teams of teenagers or young adults on mission trips. Sure, they accomplished something meaningful in the country they visited, but the biggest change happened in the lives of the people who went. But if all they did was just become aware and not commit to a lifetime of sharing the

good news of Jesus, serving the needy, and ministering to people in their world, then the story isn't complete. Action must follow awareness.

HOW YOU CAN DO THIS

Right now you might be ready to do this—to plunge into this exciting new adventure. You also might feel overwhelmed and intimidated—this will require some courage and boldness. I'll go into more detail near the end of the book, but here are four important steps as you move forward.

Pray

Pray for God's clarity and focus as you read this book, discuss it with friends, and then go without. Pray that God would open your eyes to the needs of the world, including needs I don't directly discuss in these pages. Pray that God would fill you with an amazing measure of compassion and love for people in need. Pray that God would give you powerfully creative ideas on how your excess could benefit people who lack. Pray that your life would never be the same after you take on some of these challenges.

Read

I don't want this to be the kind of book where you read about my experiences, get some feel-good emotions about helping people in the world, and then move on with your life. As you read these chapters, imagine yourself in my shoes. (Except when I talk about

going without shoes—then imagine what it feels like to go without!) See if you're captivated by one of the challenges I discuss. Read with a prayerful attitude, asking God to reveal ways you can put these ideas into practice in your own life, your own sphere of influence.

Discuss

Don't do this as a solo adventure. Gather with a group of friends or your Sunday school class or your small group or your family or your entire youth group. Discuss the ideas in this book. Talk about what I did and what you'd do similarly—or differently! I think you'll find it easier to make it through the experiments if you have others around you who are also participating in them at the same time.

Go Without

Once you've prayed, read, and discussed, keep the adventure moving. It's time to go without something. Choose an issue, do some research, decide what you'll go ten days without, look for ways to partner with a ministry or organization, tell others what you're going to do, and then do it!

Ten Days Without is a chance to move beyond dialogue and good intentions, a way to make a difference in your community, your nation, and your world. Your life will change as you experience and understand these issues better and as you rebel against the social norm of consumerism through the ancient art of fasting—going without.

You have a powerful, God-given opportunity to make a difference by influencing the people around you. As you embark on this journey, not only will you open up yourself to new adventures and understanding, but you will also make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

Are you ready? Let's begin!



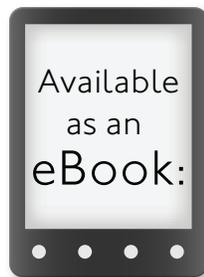
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