



# Take Action for a Change

*We can solve the most thorny social problems if we work together.*

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

## ***Faith Works: Lessons from the Life of an Activist Preacher***

*By Jim Wallis. 357 pages. Hardcover. New York: Random House.*

**J**im Wallis, in addition to spending his life as an activist, knows many other organizers. He knows what's required to make change. Successful organizers have gritty determination and believe that ordinary people can solve problems if they just pull together. "It's not that you can't do it alone but that you shouldn't," he writes.

Wallis' test of social work is: Will what you are doing change your life? He feels many in his generation fail the test. Material wealth is spiritually dangerous, says Wallis, which may be why America is in so much trouble. Many Americans fear economic failure but find economic success meaningless. As they step into leadership positions, they often want to recapture the ideals of their younger days. This renewed spirit of community involvement, linked with a younger generation hungry for service, means that exciting new possibilities for change could emerge.

Wallis wants us to accept that mistakes will be made and to just start doing something. Use the gifts you have to make change, he urges. Only the commitment to move beyond ourselves can bring the fulfillment for which we hunger.

Social movements begin with minorities motivated by what is right. Action changes the debate. It is inclusive, community-building, visionary, because it is based in hope that change can occur and faith that you are doing the right thing.

Wallis advocates for faith-based organizations to take action addressing poverty. He believes such a movement can be built on the common ground faith-based organizations share.

That action will swell into a social movement, much as the civil-rights movement did. Along the way, it will address many other pressing social issues—drug abuse, crime, the decline of the family—as it builds bridges and taps into people's need to make a difference. ■

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