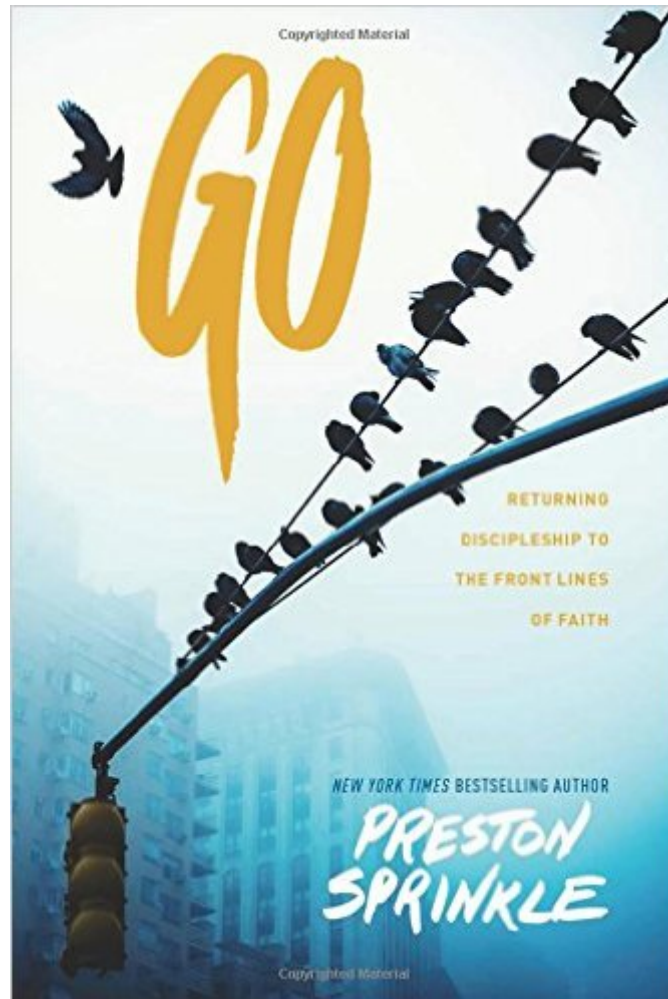


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Go: Returning Discipleship To The Front Lines Of Faith



Synopsis

Disciple-making is a passion of many, as it should be. It is, after all, our great commission. But much of contemporary discipleship is informed by instinct, and as such it is vulnerable to the whims and trends of the broader culture, which can take us further away from our biblical model and mandate. Drawing on a 2015 Barna Group study of the state of discipleship in the United States commissioned by The Navigators, bestselling author Preston Sprinkle provides a holistic, biblical response for discipleship, providing accessible tools for all those who are engaged in making Christ-followers in the 21st century. Sprinkle points pastors, church leaders, and frankly, all Christ-followers, to a discipleship that is responsive to this most current research and accountable to the model of Jesus and his earliest followers, who counted making disciples as their most important work. In an extremely practical fashion, *Go* helps us to discern, from the Scriptures and from exemplary disciple-making ministries, what discipleship is and is not, what it has become and what it can still be.

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Customer Reviews

So I just finished *Go* and I have to tell you that my highlighter got an insane workout. There are many things Sprinkle point out that I'm wrestling with in my own journey, or I found that really challenged me. You can't help but re-evaluate why we "do church" the way we do. I especially liked his open thoughts and sharing of his own vision in Chapter 9. The people I interact with are so attached to the way we do church traditionally that when I talk about

many of the things pointed out in this book, I get crazy looks. It was very refreshing to read because it confirmed that I'm not the only crazy one which thinks we're mostly missing the whole point of the Great Commission.

Without an authentic reliance on God's unmerited delight, we cannot follow the sinless Savior. Unless God stubbornly pursues us-which he does-we simply can't pursue him. (p. 26) Jesus is far less threatened by our doubts than we are. he knows how fragile our faith actually is-even if we try to sparkle over our weakness with good Christian performance. (p. 32) A performance-based church environment will prevent disciples from genuinely wrestling with the deep issues of life-the things that cause them to doubt. (p. 34) Christian accountability should never shame someone into obedience or make them feel unloved by God. (p. 37) When two (or three, or four) broken people come together and have nothing to hide, no one to impress, and no plastic image that they're trying to put on, it becomes so much easier to engage in honest relationships. (p.39) Churches need to resist being controlled by fear-driven rhetoric and to explore ways in which they can nurture and train people to think critically about matters of faith and obedience. (p. 80) The church has done a poor job at thoughtfully engaging the present issues of the day. From science to sexuality, Christian are being told what to think, not how to think. (p. 98) The church needs to be a safe place to dialogue. We can't be scared of hard questions, and we need to stop giving prepackaged, canned responses to complex issues. (p. 105) We love to hear ourselves talk, and we keep regurgitating dogmatic answers to complex questions. (p. 105) As image bearers, all possess gifts and talents that should be used to further God's kingdom. Yet people often feel stifled or forced to fit into a few prepackaged programs that are created from the top down. (p. 121) Only Jesus can accomplish ethnic reconciliation-tearing down walls of division and animosity and forming a unified body of Jesus followers. (p. 129) If all I do is read Scripture through my white middle-class, male lenses, and if I pursue God in a community with other white, middle class men, I'm bound to miss out the fullness of God, which is best revealed through a diverse community of image bearers. We're all prone to think about God through the homogeneous lenses we've grown up with. (p. 139) It just seems that we've created an expensive machine called church that's so dependent upon money (and lots of it) that it's hard to sustain or reproduce. And the return-making disciples who make disciples -has been far less than what we should expect. (p. 150) Discipleship Cannot Happen Apart From

Relationships (p. 44) Preston wrote *Go* in response to the books *Soul Searching* and *The State of Discipleship*. He did consult other resources, but these two titles he refers to most often. The writers (Christian Smith, Melinda Lundquist Denton) of *Soul Searching* investigate the large number of millennials who have left the church. *The State of Discipleship* is a recent Barna study which illuminated the lack of consistent church growth, proper biblical worldview, and biblical discipleship. Preston concerned, found inspiration, and *Go* is the product of much research, critical thinking, and heart. Discipleship has been a popular topic for several years, or more. However, with all the research and study the church as a whole has been ineffective at implementing many solutions. I have read about solutions in this book and others. But discipleship seems to be a minor concern to the majority and a major concern to the minority. As Preston points out in the book, many churches and leaders are more interested in efficiency and survival. Many churches have become non-communal communities. (p. 69) He even dedicated a chapter to the alarming segregation that takes place within our churches, "The Most Segregated Hour Of The Week" (p. 127-145) Preston provides heart wrenching statistics and creative solutions. I have read several other books about discipleship. I don't believe that Preston offers much new insight, the same information has been going around for years. The book is short in length and easy to read. He uses subtitles, which is great because it helps readers to focus on the main point, they also help to navigate through the book. Relative comments and paragraphs of others are inserted into the chapters, blocked off. I would recommend it to anyone who is looking for a fresh creative way to minister or anyone who wants to know what discipleship looks like. Preston writes, "like many Christian buzzwords, discipleship terms clutter the church airwaves, yet few people actually understand what they mean." (p. 5) Every now and then I read a book where I feel that I really sync with the author. As I read, I notice similar thoughts that I have had, or even things that I have said. I'm always enthusiastic when this happens, I think to myself, there are others who feel the way I do. We share the commonality of loving community and at the same time love the alone time that we experience in our thoughts and books. Preston did not coin the word "outlier" but he used it to identify people like himself (myself). Preston transparently wrote about his own struggles and concerns. In exchange for an honest review, Tyndall Blog Network has provided me a copy of this book. I have given an honest review.

Back in January I read Barna's *The State of Discipleship* and came across a short article called "Four Reflections on the State of Discipleship," which I thought was a great and insightful piece of writing. Having no idea who Preston Sprinkle was, I jumped on google and quickly discovered he

was going to release a book about discipleship based on the findings of that Barna research project. And so, I put it on my wishlist, and was overly extremely excited when I saw a chance to grab a preview copy. Last week I received a copy of *Go: Returning Discipleship to the Front Lines of Faith* by Preston Sprinkle. And I really liked this book! I flew through it in a couple of days because his writing style is so easy to follow and the content was engaging. Here are a few things I enjoyed about this book: Firstly, I love reading works by people who have a heart to see more effective discipleship and are theologically insightful. Then when they back up their opinions with facts and figures beyond anecdotal experience, it's particularly enjoyable. Preston Sprinkle brings all three to the table. Secondly, the flow of the book is great, progressing from our personal experience of Jesus, to the importance of relationship, to our missional outworking in this world. Thirdly, I applaud Sprinkle for the positive way in which he critiques the present discipleship condition, while offering compelling vision for how things could be. The book cycles between humble critique, appropriate challenge, and attractive vision. I'm glad to add this book to my collection. I've read a LOT of books about discipleship and really enjoyed this one. It may be my new go-to for someone who is looking for a good overview of what effective discipleship can look like, or to help inspire passion for discipleship. Here are some quotes I enjoyed that show the three layers of discipleship: Personal: "The Scriptures are clear that grace must be the centerpiece of discipleship. Without a rich understanding of grace, our efforts to become like Christ will fail." (26) Relational: "Discipleship can't happen without relationships. Deep relationships. Authentic relationships. Relationships where people can share their intimate struggles, confess their socially unacceptable sins, and rely on others for spiritual strength." (42) Missional: "Discipleship is far more than just mastering morality. It's even more than thinking critically about tough topics... Biblical discipleship must include mission—embodying and displaying the presence of Christ beyond the four walls of the church." (113) I received this book free for an honest review from Tyndale Publisher's™s.

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