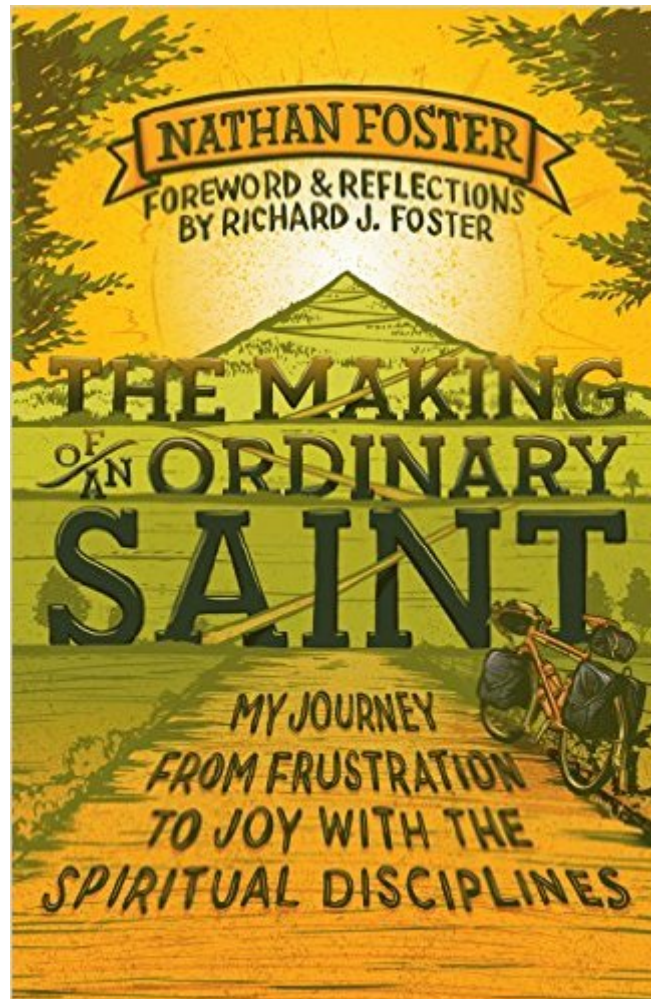


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The Making Of An Ordinary Saint: My Journey From Frustration To Joy With The Spiritual Disciplines



Synopsis

Interacting with his father, Richard, Nathan Foster explores the classic spiritual disciplines in fresh, creative ways, sharing engaging personal stories that show how these ancient practices can help us live more like Jesus in everyday life.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Baker Books (October 7, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0801014646

ISBN-13: 978-0801014642

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (37 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #53,125 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Quaker](#) #1092 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Spiritual Growth](#) #2108 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Memoirs](#)

Customer Reviews

A few years ago I was introduced to "A Celebration of Discipline" in a small-group study, and found it very helpful and was intrigued and encouraged by the pictures it painted, and the various threads of spiritual life that were all woven together and yet distinctly different, and differently practiced. So I looked forward to reading this book by the author's son, and found it not only a good "refresher" on the disciplines themselves, but a personal journal of sorts from someone who dedicated a few years of his life to integrating them into his spiritual life. The book is divided into 12 sections that cover each one of the spiritual disciplines: submission, fasting, study, solitude, meditation, confession, simplicity, service, prayer, guidance, worship, and celebration. Each section is introduced with a very condensed version of the discipline from the original chapter by Richard Foster. Then we get to hear Nathan Foster's take on each one, and get to hear about his struggles and triumphs in practicing them, and other observations he makes along the way. I appreciate his honesty and the fact that he doesn't sugarcoat things. I know there is a lot that he's left out, by desire and necessity, but he isn't afraid to identify his own brokenness and failures in the process. He certainly doesn't *have* to tell us about arguments with his wife, or bad thoughts he has about people, but he does,

and usually finds good applications and lessons to take out of them when he does choose to share specifics like this. Granted, this is just one person's take on things. He probably does not practice all of these disciplines in the same way others would, since we all have our own baggage and personal limits. But I appreciate that, despite the personal nature of what he shares, he doesn't allow his observations to get too small. In the introduction and the conclusion, he keeps coming back to the greatest commandment: love. God's love is seen as the driving force and fuel behind all of this, and joy in Him as the ultimate reward. I also appreciate that Foster doesn't take himself too seriously. He needs these disciplines to help him draw near to God, not to puff himself up. He says, "In recent years I've been coming to the conclusion that I have very little idea what's going to be good for me. I think I know what I want, but historically, some of the best things for me I never would have chosen." Thus the very real need for discipline, for all of us. These are very personal accounts, and won't follow the same way for everyone, but the book is not all about one person. He knows there's something bigger out there, and sees these disciplines as a way to connect with God. But, I was encouraged by the personal stories he shares - of the times he practiced a discipline well, or found he had to change his actions or attitudes before he could really even start to get it right. At the end of each chapter is a brief blurb about someone in history who was known for that particular discipline, which I found interesting too. I also found the two "interlude" chapters to be vital to the larger story: "Discipline Hazard #1: the Self-Hatred Narrative," and "Discipline Hazard #2: My Inner Pharisee." Some of us may identify with one of those more than the other (or both!), but in the midst of learning what discipline is and is for, it is also SO important to be reminded of what it is **not**, and once again the author is honest and willing to admit his own failures in order to help us get a better perspective. Overall, I found this book to be a great follow-up to Richard Foster's "original," and I think this could easily be read even by those who have never read "A Celebration of Discipline," though it will hopefully point readers in that direction. I may not agree with everything the author says, and we are different enough people that I can't relate with everything he experiences, but he captures enough of our common human faults and desires that there were many many parts of the narrative that I related to quite well, and I'm sure others will have the same experience. He is also a very good, clear, succinct writer, and I found myself picking this book up again even after I'd put it down, and even knowing that it was probably better to be sampled in "small bites" because each chapter contains so much to think about. Disclosure: I received this book free from Baker Books through the Baker Books Bloggers www.bakerbooks.com/bakerbooksbloggers program. The opinions I have expressed are my own, and I was not required to write a positive review. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255

Richard J. Foster first wrote his highly acclaimed *Celebration of Discipline* in 1978. In 2014 Nathan Foster (Richard's son) wrote a similar book for a new generation. The disciplines have not changed: Submission Simplicity Fasting Service Study Prayer Solitude Guidance Meditation Worship Confession Celebration. But those who are hearing this message in 2014 are different from those who heard it first in 1978. As Richard Foster writes in his Forward, Nathan's book is far more narrative than didactic. They show how they have been lived out in one man's life, rather than telling us how to live them out. For example, in the first chapter Nathan Foster tackles Submission - rather than giving us ten principles on being submissive, he tells the reader how, first, he learned to be submissive to the wind while riding his bike. He then gives an example of spending a day being submissive to the wants of his own son - including a stop at Chuck E. Cheese. Two small essays accompany each chapter. Each chapter begins with a two page essay written by Nathan's father describing and explaining the current discipline. This allows the current book to have a concrete anchor into his father's earlier work. In addition, each chapter concludes with a short biographical sketch of a significant believer from history who learned to live out the current discipline - continuing the narrative theme used throughout the book. The book ends with suggestions for Further Reading focused, first, on the *Spiritual Disciplines and Spiritual Formation In General*; and, then, on each of the twelve disciplines discussed throughout the book. These readings, covering both ancient writers (e.g. Athanasius) and more modern authors (e.g. Dallas Willard), give added value to the current book. I found the current book to be a gentle read - almost fun - as I studied again the behaviors, when practiced intentionally and regularly, that can shape a believer's life. Whether a new believer trying to establish patterns that will allow them to grow throughout their lives, or an established believer trying to add additional vitality to their walk with Christ, Nathan Foster's book will assist in those goals. As I read, I occasionally found tears welling up in my eyes as I reflected on times God had taught me or times when I may have missed his teaching because I was too busy doing my thing. Though primarily a set of true stories that focus on each of the twelve disciplines, the book is practical and designed to encourage the believer, wherever they may be in their walk with Christ, closer to the goal of being *An Ordinary Saint*.

This review is based on a free copy provided by the publisher for the purpose of creating this review. The opinions expressed are my own.

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