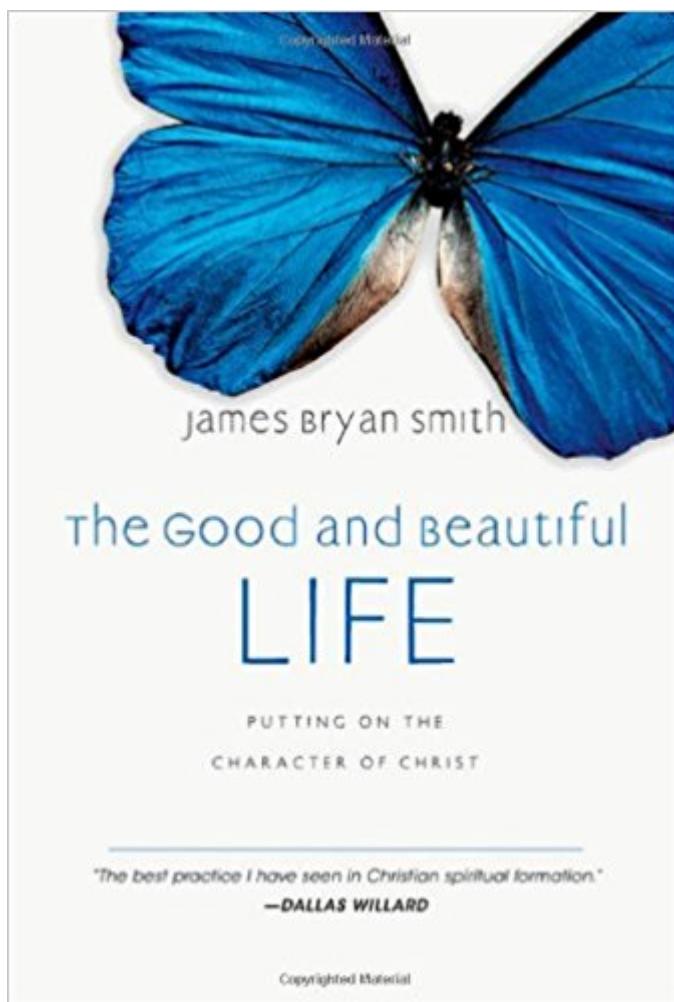


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# The Good And Beautiful Life: Putting On The Character Of Christ (Apprentice (IVP Books))



## Synopsis

"I have never met a person whose goal was to ruin his or her life. We all want to be happy, and we want it all of the time." So begins James Bryan Smith in *The Good and Beautiful Life*. The problem is, he tells us, we have bought into false notions of happiness and success. These self-centered decisions lead us further into the vices that cause ruin: anger, lust, lying, worry and judging. Eventually we find ourselves living a beautifully packaged life of self-destruction. Following the Sermon on the Mount, this follow-up to *The Good and Beautiful God* guides us to look behind these character flaws and to replace our false beliefs with Jesus' narratives about life in the kingdom of God.

## Book Information

Series: Apprentice (IVP Books)

Hardcover: 264 pages

Publisher: IVP Books (January 11, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0830835326

ISBN-13: 978-0830835324

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 137 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #9,507 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > New Testament > Jesus, the Gospels & Acts #11 in Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Bible Study > New Testament #181 in Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Spiritual Growth

## Customer Reviews

"Jim Smith is the most articulate, accurate and helpful writer of spiritual formation of my generation. I give this series my highest recommendation." (Todd D. Hunter, author of *Giving Church Another Chance*) "The Apprentice Series is the best practice I have seen in Christian spiritual formation." (Dallas Willard, author of *The Divine Conspiracy*) "The Apprentice Series is a treasure. Dr. Smith has thought long and hard about the process of human transformation into the likeness of Jesus. I urge you to buy these books immediately! Read them and apply them. Then live them out in the context of a loving community. You will not regret doing so." (Richard J. Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline* and coauthor of *Longing for God*)

James Bryan Smith (MDiv, Yale University Divinity School, DMin, Fuller Seminary) is a theology professor at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, and a writer and speaker in the area of Christian spiritual formation. He also serves as the director of the Apprentice Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation at Friends University. A founding member of Richard J. Foster's spiritual renewal ministry, *RenovarÃƒÂ©*, Smith is an ordained United Methodist Church minister and has served in various capacities in local churches. Smith is also the editor of *A Spiritual Formation Workbook*, *Devotional Classics* (with Richard Foster), *Embracing the Love of God*, Rich Mullins: An Arrow Pointing to Heaven and *Room of Marvels*.

I have been slowly reviewing the Apprentice Series by James Bryan Smith of the Aprendis Institute and Friends College in conjunction with Intervarsity Press. This is the second book in the series. I was able to read this book in the Audiobook format, which I found extremely helpful and well-done. The Apprentice Series has three parts to the series. The first book in the series is about God, and our beliefs and ideas about who he is and what kind of relationship he wants with us. The second book in the series which we are reviewing here, in the Good and Beautiful Life. The final book in the series is The Good and Beautiful Community. These books, although I did not read it anywhere, loosely correspond to Reuben Job's three simple questions, which I believe stem from Wesley: "Who am I? Who is God? Who are we together?" This book, following the model of books such as Cost of Discipleship and the Divine Conspiracy, uses the Sermon on the Mount as a blueprint for the life of discipleship. Each chapter in The Good and Beautiful Life teaches on a different part of the Sermon on the Mount. At the end of each chapter there is a "soul training" section designed to allow the readers of the book to be able to try on a practice of spiritual discipline for a short period of time to reinforce the living of the truth they have just come to understand. Particularly meaningful for me was the chapter on living the day devotionally, the chapter on anger, and the chapter on living without judgment. I thought it was profoundly insightful that the author paired the goal of living without anger with the practice of the Sabbath. Sometimes just slowing down can make us a lot less angry. Also, I liked how the author paired judgment with practicing a day without gossip. The soul practice of living the day devotionally borrowed from Madame Guyon, which I thought was just wonderful in both its presentation and its explanation. The book has a study guide. This is good because it is best if one uses this book in community, with either the resources provided by the Aprendis Institute or the study questions in the book. I can't wait to find a group in my church willing to go through this process.

In all honesty, I loved this book, I read it too fast. Now, I am re-reading it and taking it all in down to my spirit. The message that the Bible holds as to the Kingdom of God, the many times I have read the Bible I missed this message. The Kingdom of God is within us, as we as apprentices follow His teaching of love, compassion, caring for one another, forgiveness, not judgment, just kindness as my daughter says, we can remain in His kingdom. " Cast your cares on Him for He will sustain you," He loves you. I finally understood we are not righteous in ourselves but because Jesus covers us in His righteousness. He removes all guilt as He removes all our transgressions as far from us as the East is from the West, not to be remembered no more.

I can't rave enough about how much I love this book. Not only was the sermon on the mount personally transformative for me, I was able to understand it even better because of this book. I have done this book in several small group contexts (all different) and I've seen amazing transformation in people as we've walked through the curriculum together. I HIGHLY recommend this series.

This has to be one of the best Christian book series I've ever read. It has been so eye opening. James Byron Smith is my new favorite Christian author. His words are true and on my level of understanding. Great to use if your looking for a series to study with a fellow Christ follower.

The author takes you through the sermon on the mount section by section. In each chapter, he looks at the point of the text and distinguishes between the world's thought pattern (or belief or narrative) and Jesus' counter narrative. He then submits how this narrative might be played out in daily life. Each chapter ends with a 'soul training' which is an exercise or discipline that is to be worked on throughout the week. This book would be fine to do through on your own, but is intended for use with a group. The discussion questions in the back are really good and if done as intended I think would make for an outstanding bible study or small group.

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