



Q & A



Sam Van Eman, author of *Disruptive Discipleship: The Power of Breaking Routine to Kickstart Your Faith*

Sam is a resource specialist for the CCO's Experiential Designs team, where he co-creates transformational experiences for college students, professionals, and organizations. He is the author of *On Earth as It Is in Advertising? Moving from Commercial Hype to Gospel Hope*. His years on campus resulted in numerous Christian Service awards for his student leaders and a Greek Life brotherhood award named in his honor. He lives with his wife and daughters in central Pennsylvania.

Does your spiritual life need a disruptive experience?

What motivated you to write *Disruptive Discipleship*?

Sam Van Eman: Seeing college students return from experiences with a new outlook on their faith. Time and again over the years I've watched hardship on a backpacking trip or in a cave or in a mountain-swerving bus overseas force participants to rely on each other and God in ways they haven't before. And it isn't just students. All of us seem to benefit from out-of-the-ordinary moments if we're willing to learn from them. As we get older, though, and less adventurous, these moments happen less intentionally. Instead of jumping into potential growth moments, we brace ourselves against them. This is the need I'm trying to address. My hope is that readers will see the need for deeper maturity in their faith and then be willing to sign up — on purpose — for a challenge that creates space for God to work in their lives.

Who is this book written for?

Sam: Many of the stories I tell come from my work as a campus minister and wilderness leader, though I've also been through a mid-life transition and taught all ages — I tend to draw the twenty-something as much as the fifty-something. Specifically, I'd say any Christian who wants to grow in faith, especially millennials. I hope to reach the following people:

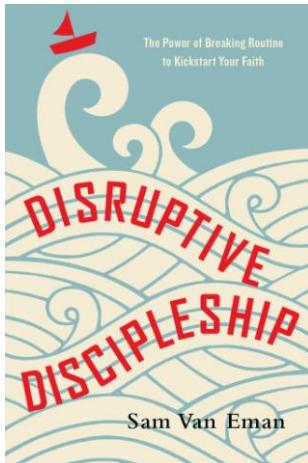
- Those who feel stuck in their faith and want to get unstuck.
- Those who follow Jesus but wonder how to take him more seriously. In light of Luke 9:23, they want to take up their cross, but there is no obvious cross to take up. They are already living, giving, and loving faithfully. In Bonhoeffer's words, there is no real cost to their discipleship right now.
- Those who are facing transition and wanting to make the most of it.

What message do you want to convey to these readers?

Sam: As followers of Jesus we cannot afford to stay at our current maturity level. We need clarity to name where and how we might be stuck, and then courage to do something about it. What is distinctive about *Disruptive Discipleship* is that it doesn't promote waiting for challenge to come; it invites it. It recognizes that Jesus praised those who were willing to sign up: Zacchaeus gets the reward, not the rich young man. The widow's mite is esteemed, not the wealthy's spare change. Each time the blessing goes to the one willing to do something about his or her situation, to the one willing to pay for it.



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**What key points do you want readers to take away from *Disruptive Discipleship*?**

Sam: The main takeaways for readers are the following:

- We can't afford to stay at our current maturity level.
- Even a small plan can stir things up.
- Disrupting routine on purpose today builds in us resiliency for unplanned disruptions tomorrow.
- Discipleship work is prompted by the Lord and carried out in community.

Disruptive Discipleship: The Power of Breaking Routine to Kickstart Your Faith

Available August 8, 2017

\$16, 228 pages, paperback

978-0-8308-4508-8

Sam has found that our spiritual lives need disruptive experiences, which can jolt and reorient us for greater spiritual maturity. Out-of-the-ordinary activities, such as a wilderness adventure or an international service trip, can challenge our assumptions and give us space to consider new perspectives. Filled with concrete examples of how ordinary people are shaped by disruptive experiences, this book provides a path to deeper faith on purpose.

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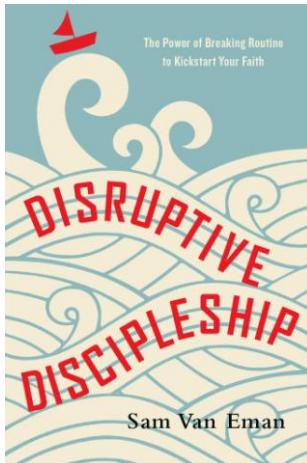
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BOOK EXCERPT



Disruptive Discipleship: The Power of Breaking Routine to Kickstart Your Faith

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"At a time when so many of us are increasingly wandering in search of comfort, we secretly prefer to be stuck instead of doing the necessary hard work before us. With courageous wit and deeply personal insights, Sam Van Eman and his Disruptive

Discipleship guided me through how to honestly identify my current path and forge a better way to lasting spiritual growth."

—Ryan Keith, president of
Forgotten Voices

Feeling Stuck

The concept of disruption has roots in family therapy. The observation was that a family develops patterns that, over time, lead to stagnancy. Therapists would disrupt these patterns to make room for new patterns, believing that simply removing an old pattern would make room for good to emerge.

But does good automatically emerge? According to marriage and family therapist Paul Johns, disruption needs direction. "A tree can certainly grow best when it has space and freedom to do so. But it can reach its fullest potential when it grows toward the sunlight; a path for which it was designed." For Paul, a Christian, that path is toward Christ.

When Jesus invited the rich young ruler to follow him, he wasn't asking for something impossible (Luke 18:22). But it felt impossible for that guy — because that guy already had his life in pretty good order. What's it like for those of us who also struggle with pride? Or fear? Or regret, guilt, or insecurity? Try asking King Herod to deny Salome's request in front of a crowd (see Mark 6:26). He wouldn't. He didn't. He liked John the Baptist, but he liked being liked even more. He was stuck.

Too often we remain stuck because we live in a mix of faithlessness and faith. We feel hopeless and hopeful simultaneously. We refuse love and yet also extend it in one breath. In other words, we've got enough of the good to make us okay with the bad. Life is like this: vibrancy and stagnancy, renewal and atrophy, all sharing the same space, which means it's normal to be somewhere along the continuum. How will we know whether our faith, hope, and love are closer to alive and free than dead and stuck? We need to test them. We need to step into new moments that reveal our current status and trajectory. These moments — designed experiences — offer more than we expect and often take us to places we did not expect.

Going somewhere unknown requires courage to admit there is somewhere to go to that is not here. Courage also helps us admit that Jesus is talking to us, not just to first-century listeners, when he asks, "How can you be so blind?" And courage enables us to name the ignorance or insecurity — or whatever has us stuck — so we can begin to move toward a maturity that reflects being a disciple of Christ. Disruptions can open our eyes.

However small the portion of faith, hope, and love we discover in ourselves, we recognize it as a gift from God. Imagine, then, what can happen when we acknowledge the ways this gift has been underused and also confess the ways it has been misused. It will take courage. We won't be thriving at a higher level yet (Jesus has work to do and so do we), but we can grow because we're on our way.

— Adapted from chapter one, "Feeling Stuck"

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