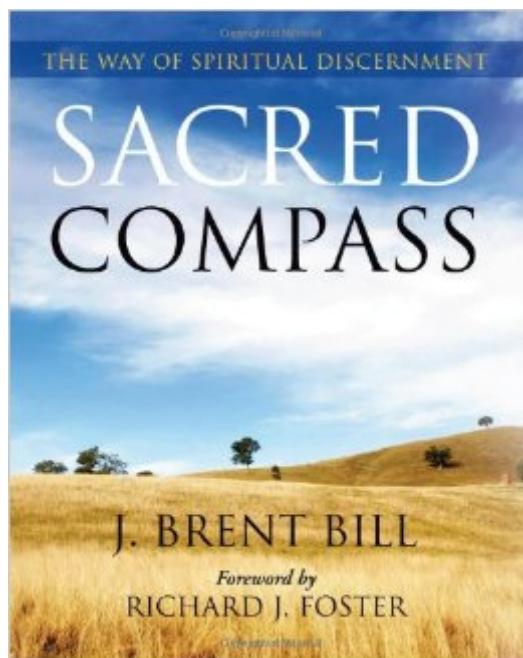


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Sacred Compass: The Way Of Spiritual Discernment



Synopsis

Offering a fresh and deeper way to live a God-directed life that eschews simple spiritual solutions, this volume explains that discernment is unique to each person. The text leads the reader into a life of continuous experiences of God and of transformation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

J. Brent Bill's latest and most ambitious book in recent years should carry a warning label on the back cover:1.) Your spiritual path may be dangerous to your health.2.) Do not attempt this journey alone. It's those two truths that set Brent's voice apart from a host of other spiritual writers who are crowding into bookstores these days with promises of 10 (or 30 or 365) Steps to Your Spiritual Success and often seem to send you off all alone on this personal quest for spiritual satisfaction. Brent is a Quaker writer, rooted so deeply in the wisdom of this centuries-old tradition that he can't help but be honest about life's destination (which always lies is death and, in some cases, involves tragic death). At age 57 as this book is released, Brent can feel it in every fiber of his being that God doesn't want us to take this journey alone. God intends us to live in communities and to draw on the wisdom of those communities to help us discern the wisest spiritual paths ahead of us. Now, don't get me wrong. This book isn't somber. It's not a downer. The golden Midwest meadow and bright blue sky on the cover of Brent's book reflects his own grounding in the steady ethics and expectations of middle-American life. After all, he lives near Indianapolis on a small farm and he works for the Indianapolis Center for Congregations, which is funded by the Lilly Endowment

with a specific mission to help local congregations solve their problems. Over the years, he's helped to solve hundreds of thorny problems. As a writer, Brent most recently wrote books focused on Quaker spiritual wisdom involving the simplest elements of life: light (that book is "Mind the Light: Learning to See with Spiritual Eyes") and sound (that book is "Holy Silence: The Gift Of Quaker Spirituality"). I've read and can heartily recommend both of them. He's a practical Midwestern farmer, fixer and facilitator - drawing deep water from a denomination that stretches back more than 350 years and played a key role in shaping American values from our colonial era. This makes him a substantial spiritual guide, but never in a flashy way. Think of - oh, perhaps something like Mister Rogers Meets the Dalai Lama. It's only natural that such a writer would point us toward a tool as the central metaphor for this journey. And the tool he selects is a compass - the hand-held device with a magnetic needle that points sort-of true North. Unlike a host of other books you'll find in the inspirational sections of bookstores, this isn't a book with lofty passages designed to lift your spirits in the morning - but leave you sinking fast later in the day. This is a book jam packed with tips for organizing and shaping your journey into discernment. And, note that I said "into," because it's not "toward" spiritual discernment - or "to" spiritual discernment - as if you'll arrive at a golden sign, hand lettered by the finger of God. Brent argues persuasively that this journey never ends and we're never quite sure where it will take us. It's that plain-and-simple honesty that I like best about this book. No false promises here. And, by the end of his book, just in case you didn't "get" the solid tap-tap-tap of Brent's rubber mallet to your forehead -- one of his final chapters is about a Quaker who felt led to a war zone and never returned. If you've got a stack of those slickly produced spiritual books near your breakfast table, but they only seem to leave you hungry for the next hit of chicken soup - then try this more substantial diet from the heart of middle-American spiritual wisdom. If you're part of a small group, you'll find that men and women will enjoy this book over a couple of months. You can even experiment with a sampling of the many ideas Brent describes throughout the book. The text is easy to read, the practical benefits of the ideas are crystal clear - and you should spark a good round of conversation each week. Here's one last suggestion: If you plan to read "Sacred Compass" with a group, a fascinating companion book to read along with it is Nanette Sawyer's, "Hospitality the Sacred Art: Discovering the Hidden Spiritual Power of Invitation and Welcome (Art of Spiritual Living)." At first glance, these two books seem to be two quite different spiritual toolboxes - but the core of both books is an affirmation of communal connection.

I've read and enjoyed all of Brent Bill's books. While they all were enriching, this book is uniquely helpful. Its common-sense approach to the spiritual life makes this a wonderful book for more

seasoned saints, but also appropriate for those new to the life of faith. This book is a grand slam. Buy three copies. One for yourself, and two for your friends. You'll be doing them a favor. Phil Gulley

This is not another mere "how to" book of guidance or spirituality. In this book the author lets us in on some of the ways of God's leading among us primarily looking to his own experience of paying attention to the "sacred compass" found in each one.

I was reading this book while admiring discerning a major leading. This book supplied me with tools and clarity that I so desperately been seeking. I advise this book to everyone--we all have discernment at some points in our life and this is a book one can turn to time and time again.

J. Brent Bill's *Sacred Compass: The Way of Spiritual Discernment* truly serves as an effective guide and friend on our spiritual journeys. He inspires, explains, unpacks, and lays out a clear and practical path for individuals and groups to practice spiritual discernment. From the first chapter to the last he points the way and encourages us with his wisdom and helpfulness. In the Introduction Bill challenges us to think of discernment as more than making the right life choice, but as sensing the call of God on the whole of our lives. In the final chapter he calls us to accept the Spirit's invitation to "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls." Each chapter in between contributes to understanding and practicing the "way" of spiritual discernment. The chapter I read again and again was "The Dark Path." It really touched me. All of us get lost at one point or another in our lives and the authentic gentle manner in which Bill describes that reality and then guides us through what it is and what we might do, was profoundly helpful. The chapters are also rich with stories and poems. He bullet points and main points which carry the reader along with clarity. If you want to tackle the mystery of spiritual discernment, Bill's book makes the topic still elegant in its strangeness but beautifully accessible to anyone wanting to live each day mindful of God's presence and call.

As a spiritual director and instructor of spiritual directors I have read many books on discernment. I found that Bill takes us beyond the step 1,2,3 outlines many give us to a way to pay attention to the gentle nudges of the Spirit that go on moment by moment in our daily life. This seems to be a more realistic approach to following "the Way" in everything we do as compared to a method that one "uses" for decision making periodically. Here one pays attention to the Spirit within who guides us

through our own feelings, thoughts and bodily responses to the events of our lives. This is a book I want to recommend.

This was a requirement for one of my classes but I have found it to be an interesting read so far. The kindle edition was an easy download and I like the fact I can take it anywhere I go and don't have to carry a heavy book :)

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