

DISCIPLINES for life

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

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Revised Edition

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SOVEREIGN GRACE™ MINISTRIES
The Pursuit of Godliness Series

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Disciplines for Life, like each book in the Pursuit of Godliness series, is designed for group and individual use. The series is the logical outgrowth of four deeply held convictions:

- The Bible is our infallible standard for faith, doctrine, and practice. Those who resist its authority will be blown off course by their own feelings and cultural trends.
- Knowledge without application is lifeless. In order to be transformed, we must apply and practice the truth of God's Word in daily life.
- Application of these principles is impossible apart from the Holy Spirit. Though we must participate in change, he is the source of our power.
- The church is God's intended context for change. God never intended for us to live isolated from or independent of other Christians. Through committed participation in the local church, we find instruction, encouragement, correction, and opportunities to press on toward maturity in Christ.

As you work through these pages, we trust that each of these foundational convictions will be reinforced in your own heart.

With the possible exception of the "Group Discussion" questions, the format of this book is equally suited for individuals and small groups. A variety of different elements have been included to make each chapter as interesting and helpful as possible. For those of you who can't get enough of a particular topic, we've listed at the end of many chapters one or more additional books that will help you grow in the Lord.

While you are encouraged to experiment in your use of this book, group discussion will be better served when members work through the material in advance. And remember that you're not going through this book alone. The Holy Spirit is your tutor. With his help, this book has the potential to change your life.

FOREWORD TO THE REVISED VERSION

This book has its origin in our personal quests to grow closer to God and to find our greatest delight in him. As we have sought to increase in the knowledge of our Lord and the experience of his truth and love, we've become convinced that the spiritual disciplines are an essential means of grace. God stands ready to give, but we must position ourselves to receive.

As with any book or sermon, this material did not develop in a vacuum. We are indebted to many other authors, too numerous to mention here, who have influenced our thinking about the spiritual disciplines. Many of their books are listed in the "Recommended Reading" section at the end of each chapter. Key thoughts are quoted in highlighted boxes throughout the book.

The content of this revised version is not greatly different from that of the original book. Most of the text changes have been made in Chapters One, Two, and Eight, and derive largely from an expanded understanding of the all-pervasive sinfulness of the human heart. While the original book still retains value, and we would not discourage the use of those copies already in circulation, we trust that new readers will be somewhat better served by this revised version. We would, however, encourage small-group leaders wishing to take a group through this book to try to assure that each member is using the same version.

Greg Somerville invested many long hours in the original effort to bring this book to completion. Greg's work reflects more than his skill as an editor; he also leads a small group, and we think you'll appreciate how he has developed questions that encourage group participation and help draw these studies out of the realm of theory and into daily practice.

Assisting Greg in making the original book possible were two gifted and dedicated individuals: production coordinator Beth Kelley and graphic designer Carl Mahler. Their creative suggestions and keen eye for detail helped make each draft better than the last. The revised version benefited significantly from the work of Kevin Meath (editorial) and Martin Stanley (design/production). For the combined expertise and enthusiasm of these two publishing teams we are deeply grateful.

— **C.J. Mahaney and John Loftness**