

WHY SMALL groups?

TOGETHER TOWARD MATURITY

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SOVEREIGN GRACE MINISTRIES
The Pursuit of Godliness Series

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Why Small Groups?, 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. While 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 each of these foundational convictions will be reinforced in your 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 each chapter 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

Some might be wondering, “Why another book on small groups?” Actually, we would prefer that a book like this weren’t necessary, but it clearly is. Though there seems to be an endless supply of books written about and for small groups, we have found little that 1) contains sound doctrine, 2) is written by pastors, and 3) places a biblical emphasis on the local church. So you hold in your hands our small contribution. We hope it is helpful.

Participating in this project was a real joy because of its purpose and content. No less significant was the honor of working with men I deeply respect. Each of the men who contributed to this book is passionate about God, the local church, and small groups. I believe that will be evident as you read each chapter. What may not be evident is the sacrifices they have made over the years to train and care for God’s people.

You won’t find theories in this book; you’ll find biblical principles that have been put into practice by the authors since the early 1980s. For this I would like to thank each of the authors. Apart from their effective service and leadership, this book would not be possible. Special thanks to Greg Somerville, not only for his fine chapter but for his excellent editing skills as well.

This book is dedicated to all the small-group leaders in the churches we have had the privilege to serve. You have been exemplary in your passion for God, your commitment to the local church, your support of your pastors, and your care for God’s people. We thank God for each of you! And we can’t thank you enough for the difference you make. It is a distinct privilege to serve our Lord and his purpose with you.

Soli Deo Gloria!

— **C.J. Mahaney**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

C.J. MAHANEY leads Sovereign Grace Ministries and serves as senior pastor of Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. He is author of *The Cross-Centered Life* (Multnomah Publishers). C.J. combines his passion for studying and teaching biblical truth with an equal passion for experiencing it in local church life. He and his wife, Carolyn, have four children.

JOHN LOFTNESS credits his wife, Nancy, with first showing him how to ask the questions—and listen to the answers—that lead to true, biblical fellowship. John, a former school teacher, principal, and editor of *People of Destiny* magazine (later *Sovereign Grace* magazine), has served Covenant Life Church as a pastor full-time since 1989. He and Nancy have four children and live in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

GREG SOMERVILLE has served as executive editor of *People of Destiny* magazine (now *Sovereign Grace* magazine) and was the original executive editor for this book series. He now serves as high-school principal and a pastor-in-training at Covenant Life Church, where he and his wife, Suzy, (along with their six children) are members. Greg is indebted to the men and women of his small group, whose support and enthusiastic participation have made the years rich with memories.

MARK MULLERY served as a small-group leader, and later as senior pastor, of Abundant Life Community Church in Pasadena, California. He now serves as senior pastor of Fairfax Covenant Church in Fairfax, Virginia. Mark enjoys nothing more than personally discovering and teaching others about God's amazing grace. He and his wife, Lesley, have four children.

MICKEY CONNOLLY serves as senior pastor of CrossWay Community Church in Charlotte, NC, having first served for six years as senior pastor of Solid Rock Church in Riverdale, Maryland. He and his wife, Jane, have three children. Over the years Mickey has learned, slowly but surely, to appreciate the value of giving and receiving biblical correction. He fully expects that learning curve to continue indefinitely.

JOHN BUTLER had served for several years as a small-group leader and pastor when God called him to help pastor a new church in Chesapeake, Virginia, now known as Sovereign Grace Church. He serves today as senior pastor of that church, having sent out several of the other pastors to plant a church in Denver. John and his wife, Beverly, have two children.

DAVE HARVEY experienced one test of his commitment to church life years ago when he lingered in a low-paying job in order to stay involved in a vibrant local church. Eventually, God directed him to move to Philadelphia to join a new church-planting venture. Soon he was leading a small group. Now Dave is senior pastor of Covenant Fellowship Church in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, and a member of the Sovereign Grace leadership team. Dave and his wife, Kimm, live in West Chester, Pennsylvania with their four children.