

FINDING ANOTHER KIND OF LIFE

WITH ST. IGNATIUS

AND DALLAS WILLARD

trevor hudson

We believe Dallas would have been deeply honored to see his voice included in this instructive blending of spiritual wisdom that seamlessly spans centuries, continents, and cultures. In *Seeking God*, the wisdom of Hudson, Willard, and Ignatius flows together in ways that resonate and harmonize to provide us with time-tested, gracefueled practical steps we can take as we seek God.

JANE WILLARD and REBECCA WILLARD HEATLEY, on behalf of Dallas Willard Ministries

Trevor Hudson is a dear friend, and his friendship has been a special gift. *Seeking God* is about how to seek and find a life of intimate friendship with the creator of the universe. This important book is a culmination of Trevor having lived the insights he's gained from two of his dear friends, Dallas Willard and Ignatius of Loyola. Trust your deepest desires—and the wisdom of this author—and you'll find that you are living another kind of life.

GARY W. MOON, MDIV, PHD, founding executive director of the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture and the Dallas Willard Center at Westmont College and author of *Apprenticeship with Jesus* and *Becoming Dallas Willard*

This is the book I needed to read in this season. The wisdom of Ignatius has been part of my life for more than two decades, and I have explored Dallas Willard's writing for about half that time. There is very little new to me conceptually in this book. And yet—Trevor Hudson's extraordinary distillation and simple explanation has moved me. Hudson has a remarkable gift, true to his Methodist roots, of making things accessible to the person in the pew. I found my heart stirred and myself challenged in ways that took me to conversation with Jesus. I would heartily recommend this book to anyone who has chosen to commit their life to companionship with Jesus.

MAGS BLACKIE, PHD, spiritual director and author of *Rooted in Love* and *The Grace of Forgiveness*

This book cannot be read well all at once. Every page brings with it an invitation to encounter the risen Lord—the source of abundant.

eternal life, which begins in the here and now. Drawing on the Exercises of Ignatius and the wisdom of Dallas Willard, Trevor Hudson invites us to experience for ourselves the power of the present Christ, who calls us by name and transforms our lives.

PAUL N. ANDERSON, professor of biblical and Quaker studies at George Fox University

I thank God for *Seeking God*. In it Trevor Hudson invites us into a life-altering journey of seeking and enlists the help of two profound individuals, Ignatius of Loyola and Dallas Willard. Both have learned to live deeply "in the house of [their] own teaching," and they are genuine companions in the Way even though they lived centuries apart. Read *Seeking God*. Practice *Seeking God*. Live *Seeking God*.

RICHARD J. FOSTER, author of several books, including *Celebration of Discipline* and *Sanctuary of the Soul*

In *Seeking God*, pastor and spiritual teacher Trevor Hudson writes with grace-filled honesty and vulnerability, pastoring readers toward a deeper spiritual life while anchoring us in our profound belovedness along the way. The spiritual exercises described in each chapter gently invite readers to remove any barriers of obligation, guilt, or performance and instead reimagine, receive, and enjoy intimacy with God in tangible and creative ways. Trevor's compassionate voice, spiritual insights, and pastoral wisdom are a gift for all of us who are longing for a more vibrant life with God.

CHRISTINE YI SUH, pastor, spiritual director, and author of Forty Days on Being a Four

Jesus promises us an abundant life through him (John 10:10), and Trever Hudson's *Seeking God* is a thoughtful and heartfelt guide to the way of Christ. This alone is reason to read this book, but the fact that Hudson also skillfully weaves into his writing the wisdom of two great spiritual teachers—Ignatius of Loyola and Dallas Willard—makes this book even more of a gift.

I found myself riveted by this book, in which Trevor Hudson invites us to seek and find another kind of life, the resurrection life of deep fulfillment and joy that God desires us to experience here and now. He helps us with the how by drawing on formative encounters in his own life with two God seekers, sixteenth-century Saint Ignatius of Loyola (through his *Spiritual Exercises*) and philosopher and spiritual writer of our own time Dallas Willard. Through Trevor's words the wisdom of these two seekers comes alive in a remarkable and deeply personal way that transforms how we see the ordinary and the everyday. It is a particular gift to be given access to some of the personal conversations and letters between Hudson and Willard and to see how the perspectives and wisdom of Ignatius and Willard interpenetrate and offer us a vision of hope and possibility for living differently. This is a book to be prayerfully read, savored, and reread often.

ANNEMARIE PAULIN-CAMPBELL, PHD, head of the Jesuit Institute School of Spirituality in South Africa and coauthor of the revision of *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed*

I don't know anyone with more spiritual wisdom than Trevor Hudson. Trevor's godliness is on full display in *Seeking God: Finding Another Kind of Life with St. Ignatius and Dallas Willard.* Seeking is not just the way into faith; it is the way on. Only a passionate seeker of God like Trevor can pass on the gems in this book from Ignatius and Willard. Trevor generates spiritual thirst in seekers and leads them to Living Water.

DR. TODD HUNTER, Anglican bishop and author of Deep Peace

Trevor Hudson knows that each one of us is on a seeking journey. Whether we've been Christ followers for decades or are newly intrigued by Jesus of Nazareth, we are all looking for the good news that promises another kind of life. In this wonderfully invitational book, Trevor leads us through the contours of the Ignatian Exercises, introducing us to Ignatius himself and to Dallas Willard as wise companions in our seeking. Trevor's honest life experiences with Jesus

kindle a lasting hope for all of us longing for a deeper life with God. Trevor's compassionate and compelling tone sets a table and invites us to "come and see." If you are longing for a deeper life with God, if you have a wondering hunger to meet Jesus, this book is for you.

LACY BORGO, spiritual director and teacher

Skillfully drawing wisdom from a sixteenth-century Catholic saint, Ignatius of Loyola; a twenty-first-century philosopher and Christian spiritual writer, Dallas Willard; and the narrative of his own life, Trevor Hudson accompanies others in their search for God. Every page of this book offers wisdom drawn from the lives of these three spiritual guides. Every age needs holy men and women to seek Jesus and be a witness for him. Ignatius and Dallas responded to this call for their contemporaries, and with them as his companions, Trevor does the same for us today. Trevor is a man of God's church, following Christ humbly and faithfully. Transcending the boundaries of denomination, he is a true ecumenist, offering anybody who is seeking a sure way of finding God. Trevor makes this wisdom accessible because he shares so much of his own heart, life, faith, experience, and discipleship. I could not put this book down—one of my favorites of Trevor's!

FATHER RUSSELL POLLITT, SJ, director of the Jesuit Institute South Africa

If I had to choose one person to turn to for wisdom on seeking God in a deep, helpful, discerning way, it would be Trevor Hudson. Trevor's new book, *Seeking God*, contains the wisdom and writing of a modern master of spiritual formation. If you read one book this year on nurturing your life with God, let *Seeking God* be the one. Very highly recommended!

CHRIS HALL, PHD, former president of Renovaré and distinguished professor emeritus of theology at Eastern University



Seeking -God-

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AND DALLAS WILLARD

TREVOR HUDSON





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Seeking God: Finding Another Kind of Life with St. Ignatius and Dallas Willard

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A NavPress resource published in alliance with Tyndale House Publishers

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ISBN 978-1-64158-438-8

Printed in the United States of America

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FOREWORD

In Seeking God, Trevor Hudson offers readers the fruit of years of praying, reading, teaching, and ministering to readers who are experiencing the desire for something more in their lives. That desire for "something more" has been planted deep in their hearts by their Creator. God has, from the arrival of human beings, wanted our friendship, and as a result of that desire, deep in the heart of every human being is a reciprocal desire for friendship with God. As you will find out in this book, Trevor Hudson himself has been taken with that desire for friendship with God all his adult life. Friendship with God has brought him great joy and deep happiness.

He calls the kind of life that includes a deep friendship with God "zoe life." Zoe is the Greek word for life in the New Testament. Hudson uses this word to distinguish what God offers us from other ways of life that do not include friendship with God.

So, if you experience a desire for a deeper kind of life than

you presently have, you have picked up a book that will help you. As I noted, Hudson himself has been seeking God all his adult life. In that seeking, he found the most help from two sources: his friendship with a great teacher and philosopher, the late Dallas Willard; and Ignatius of Loyola, the sixteenth-century Spanish founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and, more importantly for Trevor Hudson, the author of the *Spiritual Exercises*. If you take the invitation Hudson offers, you will spend a great deal of time with the spiritualities of these two sources, and both will help you to grow into the friendship with God that God himself wants.

I first met Trevor Hudson because of his seeking nature. He had come upon some of my writing and, on a trip to the United States, asked if I would lead him on an eight-day retreat. I gladly agreed to take him on. Since that time, we have been in touch by email. I consider him a friend in Christ. As he was writing this book, he asked me to review the chapters as he wrote them. I gladly agreed and have found the book insightful and inviting. Hence, I am happy to write this foreword and recommend the book to you.

Before reading this manuscript, I knew little about Dallas Willard. Trevor Hudson brings him to life here. You will meet a very holy but down-to-earth man in these pages. And I believe you will find yourself attracted to the kind of friendship with God that Willard himself seems to have enjoyed.

As a Jesuit for seventy years this August, I already knew a good deal about Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, a book of instructions for someone who will lead others into a deeper

relationship with God. Trevor Hudson not only did the *Spiritual Exercises* but has also mastered the inner dynamic that powers them and that has proven helpful to people for half a millennium. Hudson uses the structure of the Exercises to help readers develop a deep, personal relationship with God that will not only change their prayer life but will also move them to a deeper commitment to cooperating with God in the great project begun with the creation of this universe.

You are in good hands on this journey with Trevor Hudson. Let's give God the joy of deepening our friendship with him. As we do, we'll increase our own happiness and participate in building up what Jesus called "the Kingdom of God."

William Barry, S.F

CHAPTER 1

becoming a seeker

I encourage you to seek the Lord constantly, and the experiences will come along.

DALLAS WILLARD

Personal Correspondence

This book is about seeking and finding another kind of life.

As a pastor, I often sense this quest hidden in my conversations with others. People will seldom explicitly say, "I am looking for another kind of life." I do, however, hear phrases like these:

- "There's something missing in my life."
- "My life is such a mess."
- "Is this really what it's all about?"
- "Surely, there must be more to my faith than what I am experiencing."

- "I'm not getting much out of going to church right now."
- "I've given up on organized religion."

Each time sentiments like these are expressed, I hear echoes of the longing to find another kind of life. And it's a longing I well understand.

Some time ago, Debbie, my dear marriage partner of over forty years, said to me, "Ever since I've known you, you've been a spiritual seeker." She was right. For over forty years, my life has been shaped around my search for the life that I have glimpsed in the stories of those early followers of Jesus on the pages of the New Testament.

Since you have picked up this book, I assume you are willing to join me in seeking another kind of life. Each of us must make our own way through the maze of questions, the mystery, and the paradoxes that life brings us, but the gospel promises us that those who seek will find (Matthew 7:7). Only those open to becoming intentional seekers discover the radiant life that God wants to give us.

My prayer is that as you read this book, God will surprise you in your seeking and draw you more deeply into the fullness of life that is the promise of the gospel.

Encouragement for the Seeking Journey

As we begin this seeking journey together, we receive much encouragement from the Scriptures. Here are three verses to get us started:

When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD.

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JEREMIAH 29:13-14
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Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

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MATTHEW 6:33, NIV
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Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

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MATTHEW 7:7-8, NIV
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The promise is clear. Those who seek God consistently, faithfully, and passionately will not be disappointed. They will find God and all those good things that accompany God's Kingdom.

We really need to grasp this because we have a tragic tendency to regard only those who are outside the Christian faith as seekers. We then assume that once someone gives their life to Christ, their seeking comes to an end. It is exactly the opposite. That is when the quest really begins. Christianity is essentially a seeking faith.

So an important question at the outset of our journey is this: *Are you willing to take these biblical invitations to seek God seriously?* I hope you will.

When it comes to spiritual seeking, we can learn a lot from dedicated scientists. They often spend a lifetime searching to unlock the mysterious secrets of the physical world around us. Most of the greatest discoveries have been made by scientists who refused to give up seeking. Often these breakthroughs of scientific knowledge are made by those who do not lose a childlike sense of wonder and exploration. For example, even though Einstein struggled with dyslexia, he nurtured a delightfully childlike quality of seeking throughout his life.

Surely, given the even greater mystery of God, and the unseen realities of God's Kingdom, we need to follow their example. When we cease seeking, we find ourselves in danger of dying spiritually. Our faith gets bogged down in dull familiarity, empty routines, and tired clichés. In stark contrast, becoming a seeker brings us alive spiritually. We come alive to the mystery of ourselves, of those around us, of the world in which we live, and above all, of the active presence of God permeating all things. Few invitations are more important than the biblical one to seek God and the life that God wants to give us. This is the essence of the spiritual quest that we will explore in this book.

Even more than scientists, the great Christ followers throughout history encourage us to keep on seeking. From Paul in the New Testament onward, we meet wonderful people of faith who gave themselves to a lifetime of searching. When we study their lives, no matter whether they were Protestant or Catholic or Orthodox, the one thing that

becomes clear is that they continually sought God. These men and women remind us that when we seek God resolutely, we will find God to be real and active in our lives. Indeed, God will come to us and communicate the divine Trinitarian reality in all its glory, beauty, and power. We will discover another kind of life.

Keeping Jesus at the Center

My own seeking journey with God has continued now for just over fifty years. As with all intimate and growing friendships, there have been many highs and lows. Almost daily I am confronted with the inadequacies of my own life with God. I still find myself struggling with discouraging symptoms of self-centeredness, self-interest, and egocentricity. There has, however, been one unrelenting constant that has both encouraged and guided my own seeking: the shining figure of Jesus of Nazareth.

My spiritual seeking began in my teenage years. As a sixteen-year-old, I was very aware of the preciousness of this one life. I wanted it to count for something. Thankfully, I met Phillip, a young Christ follower who sat next to me at school. There was something different about his life—not weirdly different but rather attractively different.

When I asked him about this difference, he introduced me to his friendship with Jesus Christ. He shared with me how Jesus gave his life on the cross for us, told me about how he lives now beyond crucifixion, and explained how the Spirit can give us new life today. Phillip went on to say that if I wanted to experience this new life, I needed to turn toward Christ and give my life to him.

This basic, street-level gospel shone a bright light into my heart. Late one night, as I was walking down Havelock Street in my hometown of Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, South Africa, I made my decision. I recall looking up at the sky and saying something like "Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for everything you have done for me because of your love. Please come into my life and make me the person you want me to be." That teenage moment of inner surrender to the crucified love of God shaped the rest of my life.

My journey with Jesus, and into the fullness of life God gives, had begun. For the past fifty years, that Christ light has continued to be my encouraging and guiding presence as I have sought to follow Jesus into the life of the Kingdom of God, here and now.

Now you can see why, as we reach out for the life that God gives us, I want us to stay close to Jesus. On any seeking journey it is easy to lose our way. Thankfully, Jesus lights the path for our steps along the way. Through his words and deeds, his death and resurrection, he offers himself as the one who uniquely leads us into the life of his Father's Kingdom.

This is the astonishing mystery of our life with God: The way into it is simply through coming to know, love, and follow Jesus Christ. As we learn to keep company with him daily, he steps out from the pages of the Gospels and becomes for us a living and empowering presence. Step by step, he

leads us into the fullness of life that is the astounding promise of the gospel.

Learning from Two God Seekers

On our seeking journey together, we will explore the wisdom of two God seekers who powerfully influenced their respective generations, many centuries apart.

Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556)

In 1990 I experienced a major vocational disappointment. As a result, I needed to make critical decisions about my future. Not wanting to rush into premature decisions, I was encouraged by an Anglican sister to do the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius. Let me be honest and say I had no idea what they involved! Sister Maureen suggested that I ask Father Andrew Norton, an Anglican monk from the Community of the Resurrection, to explain them to me. I will never forget his surprise when I knocked on his door and asked him to take me through the Exercises.

At the end of my first visit, he said to me, "I don't know what a high-church Anglican like me is doing with a low-church Methodist like you. God must have a sense of humor."

So began my adventure with Ignatius. It has been almost thirty years since that pilgrimage through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Since then, I have learned a great deal more about them and about Ignatius, who first put them together. Not only have I had the privilege of giving the Exercises to many

others, but it has also been a special joy, in recent years with the local Jesuit family here in Johannesburg, to train others to give them.

What has struck me is how, when they are suitably adapted, they connect with Christ followers from across denominational tribes. Whether you are Catholic or Protestant, mainline or independent, charismatic or Reformed, or have no formal church background at all, they seem to strike a responsive chord in the hearts of anyone eager to seek God more radically and wholeheartedly.

I hope that you will enjoy getting to know Ignatius. Although he did a few things that look a bit crazy from our twenty-first-century perspective, he also had a huge heart for God that captures our seeking imagination. He longed for those around him to give themselves freely and generously to following Jesus. The *Spiritual Exercises* that he put together reveal a profound spiritual and psychological wisdom that is remarkably adaptable. It comes as little surprise that so many contemporary seekers find him to be a reliable and helpful guide for the journey into the life God graciously offers.

Dallas Willard (1935-2013)

My first introduction to Dallas was in 1985. I was in bed, sick with mumps, when I listened to an audio cassette of his teaching on the Kingdom of God. Something in his teaching struck a deep, responsive chord in me. As I listened to

him explore the themes of the availability of the Kingdom of God, the realness of the spiritual dimension, and the connections between discipleship, daily life, and mission, the flame of my longing to know, love, and follow Jesus burned brighter.

I knew that I had so much more to learn from Dallas. So I wrote a letter, inviting him to come to South Africa and spend some time teaching in the congregation where I pastored. I said I could raise his airfare but could not offer hotel accommodation or promise an honorarium. It certainly was not an attractive offer.

To my surprise and delight, Dallas responded positively to this request from a stranger. Nor, he said, did we have to worry about payment.

What struck me most, during his three weeks with us, was not so much his words. It was his life. He lived in the house of his own teaching. Like many others, I was struck by his unhurried, attentive, and compassionate presence. One reason I took his insightful ideas about God and God's Kingdom with absolute seriousness was that he obviously lived in these invisible realities himself. He was a credible witness.

Over the next twenty-five years, it was my privilege to learn from Dallas in many ways. He ministered in South Africa three more times, wrote helpful books on the life of faith, and continued lecturing in his home country. I read whatever I could get my hands on, listened to his recorded

talks, and went over and over my notes from his time with us. It was, however, through personal conversation and correspondence that I learned the most from him.

In one letter, dated May 2, 1995, he responded to my longing for a deeper experience of a living, present, and personal God with this counsel:

I encourage you to seek the face of the Lord constantly, with the knowledge that experiences will come along. You should experience God. I would be nothing and have no faith apart from various experiences of God that have come to me. You should expect experiences and make yourself available to them. To seek them is just misguided, not wrong. We have no idea of what ours will be like, and they certainly will be unlike anyone else's.

Throughout this book, I will share some of the faith lessons I learned from both Ignatius and Dallas. It will become clear that, although they speak to us from different centuries, Ignatius and Dallas had much in common. Both were convinced that invisible things like the Trinity, the Kingdom of God, and the soul are as real as the coffee and toast that we have for breakfast.

Both stressed that, through direct interaction, God can be experienced as a knowable, personal, and loving reality. Both believed that we can be transformed into the compassionate character of Jesus. Above all, both were adamant that the greatest opportunity in life is to come to know Jesus intimately, love him more deeply, and follow him more closely. For these reasons, and several more, both Ignatius and Dallas make ideal companions for our seeking journey.

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius

The structure of this book has been significantly shaped by the major themes of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The Exercises follow a careful plan that is based on Ignatius's own experience of spiritual seeking. These central themes revolve around the relationship between God's good news and our own deepest desires, the astounding reality of God's personal love reaching out to each one of us in our sinfulness, the life and ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and the active presence of God permeating and filling all things.

These themes offer themselves as signposts that can guide us in our spiritual search. Seekers always need some practical guidance, and I hope that you will find the insights from the Exercises as helpful in your spiritual seeking as I have in mine.

The *Spiritual Exercises* also connect with seekers outside the institutional church.

Recently I came across the moving testimony of the gifted actor Andrew Garfield. As he prepared for his role as a Jesuit priest in Martin Scorsese's haunting film *Silence*, he asked popular Catholic author Father James Martin to take him through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Although Father Martin was initially reluctant, he sensed that Garfield was really seeking

for something more in his life. His intuition was spot-on. For almost a year, Father Martin took the actor through this journey of gospel-based, Christ-centered meditations that millions of other seekers have done.

In an interview with *America Magazine*, Garfield shared the life-changing effects of this prayer journey: "There were so many things in the Exercises that changed me and transformed me, that showed me who I was . . . and where I believe God wants me to be. . . . What was really easy was falling in love with this person, was falling in love with Jesus Christ. That was the most surprising thing."

The interviewer described how, as he said these words, Garfield became quiet, obviously deeply moved. Then, pressing his hand on his chest between his stomach and his heart, he joyfully exclaimed: "That was the most remarkable thing—falling in love, and how easy it was to fall in love with Jesus. . . . I felt so bad for [Jesus] and angry on his behalf when I finally did meet him, because everyone has given him such a bad name. . . . And he has been used for so many dark things."

Like all seekers, like you and me, Garfield was seeking to discover his own unique place and purpose in this world. He went on in the interview to share himself vulnerably: "The main thing that I wanted to heal, that I brought to Jesus, that I brought to the Exercises, was this feeling of not-enough-ness. This feeling of that forever longing for the perfect expression of this thing that is inside each of

us. . . . That wound of feeling like what I have to offer is never enough."

I find Garfield's testimony profoundly moving. It is a poignant testimony to how God, through the *Spiritual Exercises*, can lead a seeker in their unique faith journey from shallowness to depth.

This could also be why Dallas Willard once suggested that they make an excellent template for a school of discipleship. He wrote, "If you . . . make necessary adjustments to the content . . . you will see that [the *Spiritual Exercises*] offer in substance . . . a curriculum, a course in training, for life on the rock. And that is why, century after century, they have exercised incredible power over all who open themselves to them as disciples of Jesus."²

Two Important Disclaimers

In using the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius as an outline for our seeking journey, I must make two important disclaimers:

First, in this book I will not be taking you through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Your appetite, though, may be whetted to explore the possibilities of doing them. They are best given in a one-on-one relationship by someone trained to give them, either in a thirty-day, enclosed retreat setting or in daily life (as I did them) over a period of about nine months. What I do here is only weaving a few of their dominant themes, together with my own reflections, into the shape of this book. Hopefully, they will guide our steps along the way into a more interactive life in God's Kingdom.

Second, I am not encouraging you to read the *Spiritual Exercises*. Some of the classic works on Christian spirituality from the past, books like Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, or Mother Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*, or John Wesley's *Forty-Four Sermons*, are meant to be slowly read, digested, and meditated on. The book on the *Spiritual Exercises*, however, is different. Like any book of exercises, it is not meant to be read but rather to be done. In fact, if you do decide to read them, you will most probably find that it is like reading a boring instruction manual. Remember always that the *Spiritual Exercises* are meant to be done, not read.

Finally, if you have read any of my previous books, you will know how I constantly emphasize the importance of action. Throughout this book you will find some suggested "Seeking Exercises." These are designed to facilitate your own personal interaction with God around some of the themes in the *Spiritual Exercises*. They are simple and will not take much time, but they will require intention, desire, and effort. Engage them with whatever trust and faith in God you have, and the God who seeks you, far more than you seek him, will surely meet you and lead you along the way into another kind of life.

As we begin our seeking journey together, here is a prayer for you. It was the first prayer that Dallas prayed when he met with a small group of seekers in South Africa. Later I learned that he would often pray these words with those he taught:



I pray that you would have a rich life of joy and power, abundant in supernatural results, with a constant, clear vision of never-ending life in God's world before you, and of the everlasting significance of your work, day by day. A radiant life and death.