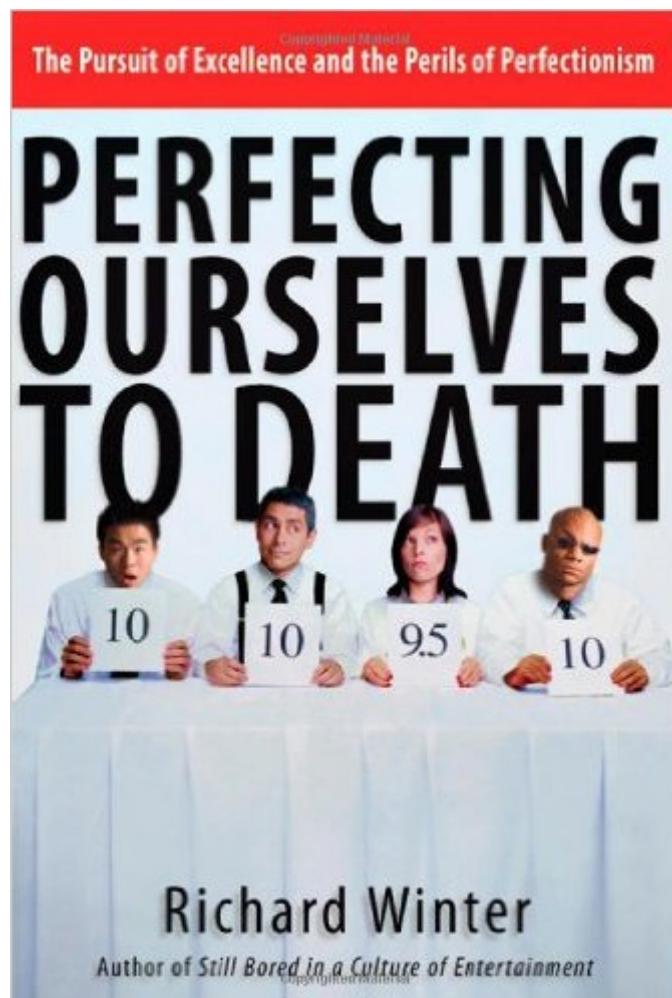


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# Perfecting Ourselves To Death: The Pursuit Of Excellence And The Perils Of Perfectionism



## **Synopsis**

Honored in 2006 as a "Year's Best Book for Preachers" by Preaching magazine. Perfect body. Perfect clothes. Perfect family. Perfect house. Perfect job. We strive for excellence in all areas of our lives. And there's nothing wrong with a healthy, mature pursuit of excellence. But what begins as healthy and normal can sometimes become neurotic and abnormal, leading to debilitating thoughts and behaviors: eating disordersanxiety and depressionobsession and compulsionsfear of failurerelational dysfunction In Perfecting Ourselves to Death, Richard Winter explores the positive and negative effects of perfectionism on our lives. He looks at the seductive nature of perfectionism as it is reflected in today's media. He examines the price and perils of perfectionism. And he explores the roots of perfectionism, delving into what originally awakens this drive in us. After analyzing the negative feelings and defeatist behaviors that unhealthy perfectionism births, he provides practical strategies for how to change. "The important thing to see," writes Winter, "is that we are to strive to become better people, not just to be content with who we are or how we measure up to the standards of the culture around us." For Christians this means becoming more like Christ in every area of our lives. Here is the "perfect" book for those who struggle with perfectionism and for those pastors, counselors and friends who want to understand and help perfectionists.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I've always had an overactive conscience, and I like to be in control. So perfectionism comes naturally to me. Any failure, real or perceived, brings on anxiety and recrimination. However, I've

grown tired of trying to live up to my own impossible ideals and the inflated expectations of others. This year, a number of trials showed me the futility of perfectionism. I'll never be able to truly control myself, my circumstances, or anyone else. Indeed, there's a big difference between who I'd like to be, and who I really am (see Romans 7). So I was ripe for the encouraging instruction of "Perfecting Ourselves to Death." Richard Winter has crafted a comprehensive, Biblically-based book on the topic of perfectionism. At its core, perfectionism is a desire for control and a means to eliminate uncertainty - in other words, if I do A, then I'll get B and avoid C. The author describes various examples of perfectionist thought patterns and behaviors, such as legalism, obsessive-compulsive thinking, and so on. From there, he goes over consequences like anxiety, eating disorders, and relational problems. Finally, Mr. Winter outlines a grace-based path that involves letting go of the perfectionist desire for control and certainty. Each chapter ends with discussion questions to assist in grasping its main idea. Some Christians fear that letting go of perfectionism will lead to moral chaos and a slacker mentality. The "Perfectionist's Prayer" on pages 127-128 perfectly illustrates this mindset. Is it possible to do well and avoid sin without a perfectionist bent? Mr. Winter suggests that we can. The journey towards maturity and excellence begins with the admission that perfection is impossible.

Perfectionist test: Do you frequently feel that you don't measure up to the standards you should? Do you turn down opportunities to serve in the church because you don't think you can do a ministry well? Do you feel that other people don't do what they should do and it frustrates you? Do you avoid risks because you can't stand to fail? Are you often anxious about things or depressed at your circumstances? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you might be a perfectionist! (And there are a lot of us out there!) Even if you do not necessarily think you struggle with perfectionism - you might, and even if you don't, you probably know someone else who does! Few things mute the impact and effects of the Gospel on our lives as much as perfectionism. And yet we have trouble recognizing the difference between striving for excellence in response to God, and living imprisoned in fear of God, ourselves or our neighbors through perfectionism. Richard Winter's new book Perfecting Ourselves to Death is helpful to all of us who want to have the Gospel impact our thoughts, hearts and behavioral patterns. Dr. Winter is a psychiatrist and professor of practical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary who trains pastors and counselors to apply the Gospel to the hearts and lives of themselves and the people they deal with. As such, this book is a wonderful combination of a clinical understanding of human behavior, coupled with a Biblical understanding of human struggles and the Biblical solution to these struggles. He writes with care,

Biblical insight, and practical applications.

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