

A GOD-CENTERED DIALOGUE



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by [Kim Butts](#)

“Converting our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer moves us from a self-centered monologue to a God-centered dialogue.” – Henri Nouwen

Reading Nouwen’s quote this week, I paused to consider once again what has been changing about my everyday life as it is gradually being transformed into an unceasing dialogue with God. For many years, having such discourse with God was an elusive reality for me.

When I became a follower of Jesus, I was taught that everyone should carve out time every morning for Bible study, worship

and prayer. I still believe this is true, for it gives my days a sense of balance and focuses me upon God's purposes for my day rather than my own. Yet, I would always find a drifting occurring as the day traveled along. Rather than trusting God as my friend, confidante, guide, wisdom and rock in the midst of every activity, conversation and relationship, I began to marginalize His participation through forgetfulness and neglect. Life became about what I was doing, where I was going and who I was connecting with. Unless His help was clearly needed, I was pretty self-sufficient and, as Nouwen states, "self-centered."

Is it possible to develop a spiritual strategy to move one's unceasing thinking towards unceasing prayer? I believe so! Spiritual practices such as silence and listening prayer are crucial in developing the discipline of continual awareness of and conversation with God. Here are some powerful ways, based upon Scripture, to help us transition from unceasing thought to unceasing prayer:

Remember that God knows all of our thoughts: In Psalm 139:2 the Psalmist says, "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar." There is no thought that escapes the notice of the Father. Our attentiveness to this fact can stop us from purposeless wandering of mind, or from focusing upon our own needs and agendas incessantly. I am always more observant of my thoughts when I cultivate an awareness that God is paying attention to them. I am more careful to consider what He thinks of my opinions, ideas and random notions and more inclined to speak to Him about them.

Ask God to search your thoughts: If God knows all of our thoughts we should prayerfully invite Him to examine our thought lives. Our awareness of His presence in our thoughts can lead to conversation with God about what is contained in them. A good prayer for this is found in Psalm 139:23: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts." Spend time listening to what He may have to say

about what you are thinking, and ask Him to show you how to change, alter, or act upon things as He brings conviction, sheds light and asks for obedience.

Take every thought captive: 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." If we pay attention to every thought, and whether or not it is Christlike, natural conversation with God will happen. Perhaps asking questions of God such as, "Father, how can I think differently about this situation?" will help us with the transformation of our minds (Romans 12:2).

Fix your thoughts on Jesus: In Hebrews 3:1 we read, "Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest." If we have taken our thoughts captive, we can begin to fix our thoughts upon the things that matter to Jesus.

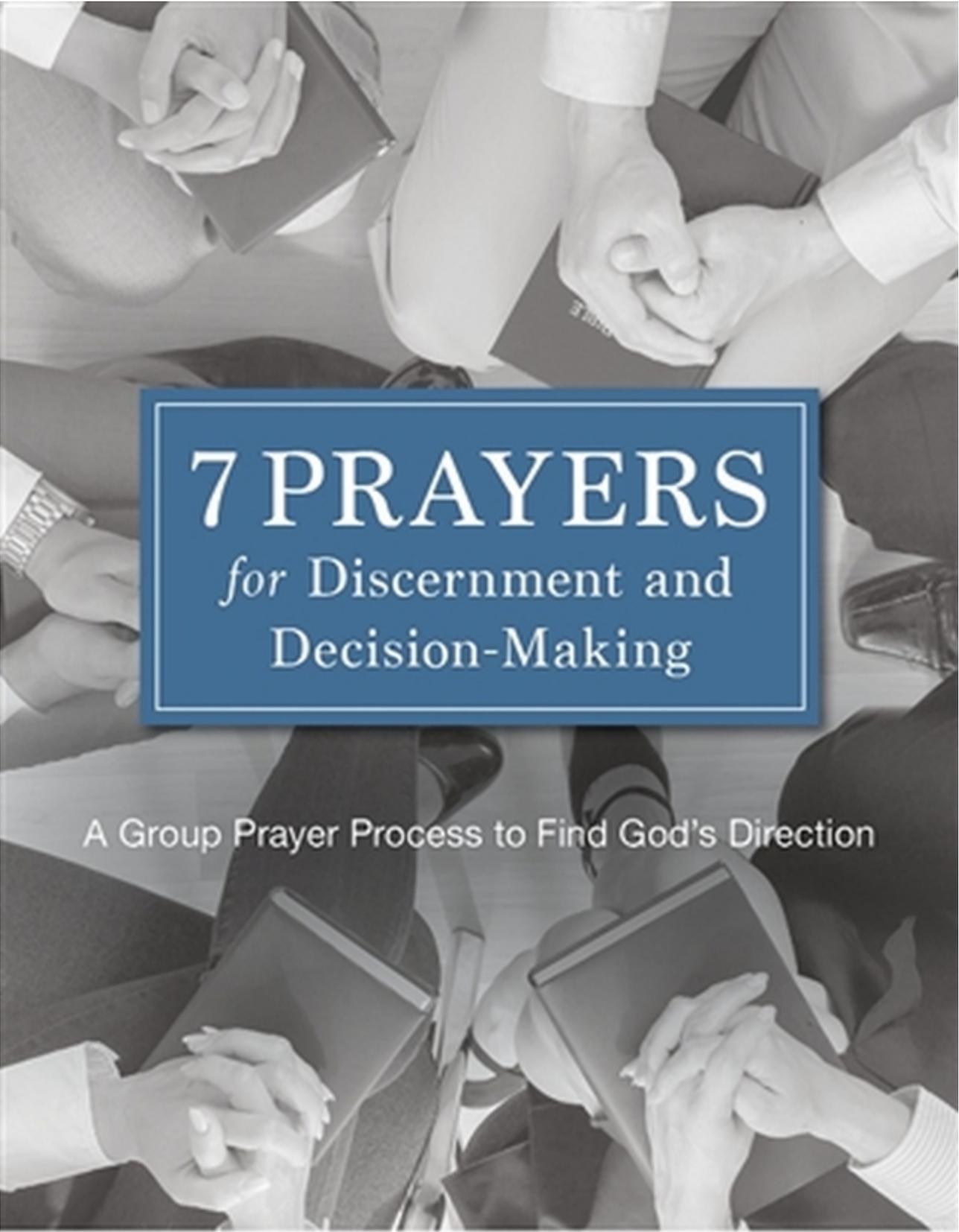
We have the mind of Christ: Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we, as believers in Christ, are able to align our thoughts with Jesus' thoughts. "For who has known or understood the mind (the counsels and purposes) of the Lord so as to guide and instruct Him and give Him knowledge? But we have the mind of Christ (the Messiah) and do hold the thoughts (feelings and purposes) of His heart" (1 Corinthians 2:16, Amplified). Because we have the mind of Christ Jesus, and because He dwells within us, we can converse continually with Him about the feelings and purposes of His heart. Desiring to see His plans for us, for others and for His world come to fruition, we will be more likely to press into ceaseless conversation to that end.

I know these are not easy steps, and that it will take some time and discipline to have an unceasing dialogue with God; however, His word gives us what we need to move in that direction. Let's pray for one another to recognize that God knows our thoughts, to invite Him to search those thoughts,

and to begin to take every thought captive by training our focus upon Jesus. Then, in the knowledge of the truth that through the power of the Holy Spirit we have the mind of Christ, our prayer lives will see great transformation.

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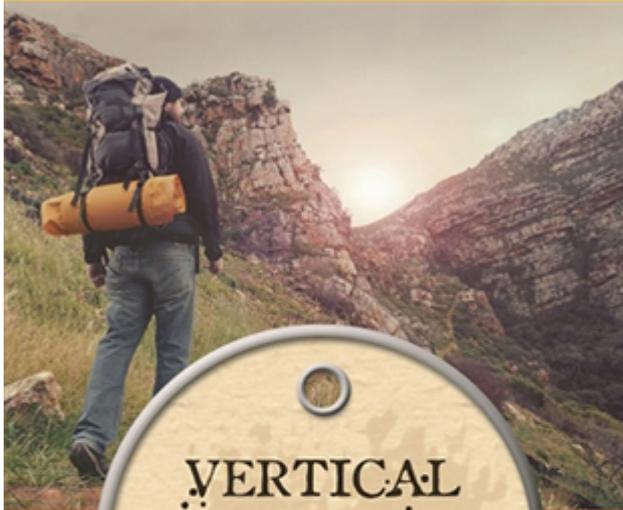
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