Creating an Atmosphere for the Presence of Jesus

Creating an Atmosphere for the Presence of Jesus

If you are married or have been in a romantic relationship, you likely can recall some special times or seasons when you were overwhelmed by the way your loved one planned the perfect setting with great care and attention to detail. Perhaps it involved music, a special event, a quiet dinner, or just a peaceful evening watching a glorious sunset at your favorite spot. What made this experience significant in your mind is the time and effort taken by another person to please you and to express his or her heartfelt love.

When was the last time you took such care and made such a profound effort to meet with the One who loves you more deeply than any human on earth has the capacity to do? He is the One who has given you eternal life, blessed you and cared for you spiritually, emotionally and physically…and who has promised never to leave you or forsake you…in good times or in the midst of suffering. Jesus is worthy of our deepest love and affection. He is worthy of the time we spend creating an atmosphere that welcomes His presence no matter the situation or season of life we are in…whether in our most joyous thankful moments or when our hearts are broken and our lives are shattered.

What if we, as believers, spent as much time preparing our hearts to create a place where Jesus feels welcomed and cherished as we would for a family member or friend…a place

where we can have an intimate conversation, hug tightly when life is hard, or simply enjoy each other's company? Prayer is that space for every believer!

I can assure you, that if you will take the time to create a sacred space in your heart and life with God, your seasons of prayer will be deeper and richer and more powerful than ever. He is the One we adore and He deserves all of our affection and attention. So, before you next spend time in prayer, consider asking and reflecting on these questions during a quiet season of preparation:

1. **Is my heart in right relationship with God and others?**Have you renounced any idolatry to things that take up more time than you are willing to pour into your relationship with God (social media, sports, television, etc.)? Have you emptied yourself in order to make room for Jesus? Is there anything you need to confess or anyone you need to make things right with before praying? "But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive you your sins too (Mark 11:25 TLB)."
2. **Am I focused upon entering the throne room of heaven to stay for a while, or am I intent on rushing through my prayer list for the day?** How have you ordered your day so that the best part is given to Jesus? Will He have your full attention, or are there distractions to pull your attention away from His face? Can you picture the Father sitting on His throne attentively focused upon you as you enter His throne room…and into His very presence? Consider how you might "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) throughout your day, just as your thoughts might be drawn to a human relationship continually.
3. **Do I worship Him because of my deep love for Him…adoring His beauty and majesty?**Sometimes it is easy to forget our First Love and let other things and other people in

life take greater importance. If we will take the time to worship in spirit and truth (for this kind of worship is true prayer), the other things we have our hearts set on begin to fall away and become lesser in our hearts. "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers" (John 4:23). Sometimes we have to lay our lists aside because we forget what we wanted to ask for in the midst of His beauty and majesty. Are you ready to worship Him? Do you long to spend time focused upon His loveliness?

4. **Do I draw near to Him with the kind of anticipation and expectation that is fueled by a childlike faith?** Jesus made much of the faith of children and urged us to come to Him this way. Are you excited to meet with Jesus, anticipating what He might show you or say to you? Do you delight in His presence and believe He will hear and answer? Are you willing to humble yourself and perhaps even posture yourself in a position to experience Jesus in whatever way you imagine a child would?
5. **Do my prayers bring honor and glory to Jesus?** This is a vital question to ask ourselves as so often we become more intent upon our own selfish desires. If our prayers are not focused upon the kingdom of God and His plans and purposes being accomplished for His glory alone, then there is always a danger of the focus being taken off of the Father and put onto us. Praying with an open Bible often keeps our prayer focus upon the things that God desires.
6. **Are my prayers focused on His will being done on earth or my will being done in heaven?** Even Jesus had to bow His will to the will of the Father and submit to death on a cross; however, His prayer was, "…not my will but yours be done (Luke 22:42)." This is particularly difficult when we pray for healing or for things that seem good to us, but the outcome is beyond our

understanding. We must learn to trust that His will is always perfect and that His ways are not our ways. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:11), and that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). What power is at our disposal to discern the Father's will!

7. **Am I yielded to hear what He might say to me?** We often spend most of our time in prayer talking to God and not spending a lot of time listening to what He may have to say to us. The priest Eli told young Samuel, when the Lord called him, to say: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9 NASB). This is good instruction for us all. Quietly wait for Him to call your name, or to give you instructions for your day…or even just for the moment you find yourself in. Sometimes all you will hear is an affirmation of His great love for you…but you will miss it if you don't take the time to wait for such an encouragement. Perhaps you will hear nothing…and that is okay too, for you are spending time in His presence. If you have ever just sat quietly with someone you love, you know that sometimes nothing needs to be said…and yet, you know what is in one another's heart.
8. **Am I able to "pray without ceasing"?**Think about creating an atmosphere that allows your thoughts to turn towards the Father continually throughout your day much as would happen with a human "love interest" that one would wish to call or make contact with as often as one's thoughts turned towards this person. What needs to happen in your life in order for Jesus to take first place in your thoughts, so that communing with Him becomes as natural as breathing? Consider prayers of continual gratitude, which is an incredibly powerful way to keep your thoughts fixed upon God.
9. **Are my prayers a sweet sacrifice with an aroma pleasing to the Father?** God is pleased when His people come to Him in prayer. "God, come close. Come quickly! Open your

> ears—it's my voice you're hearing! Treat my prayer as sweet incense rising; my raised hands are my evening prayers" (Psalm 141:1-2 MSG). Imagine your prayer life as incense rising up to the nostrils of God. How will that change the way you seek Him?

If you will sincerely take time to create a spiritual atmosphere that will attract God's presence, He will draw near and your communion with Him will be meaningful and rich. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

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Biography

Kim serves as the Executive Director of Harvest Prayer Ministries which she co-founded in 1993 with her late husband, Dave (1953-2022). Her ministry involves teaching/training and consulting as well as writing and developing resources. She is content coordinator for HPM's teaching platform, PrayerU.com

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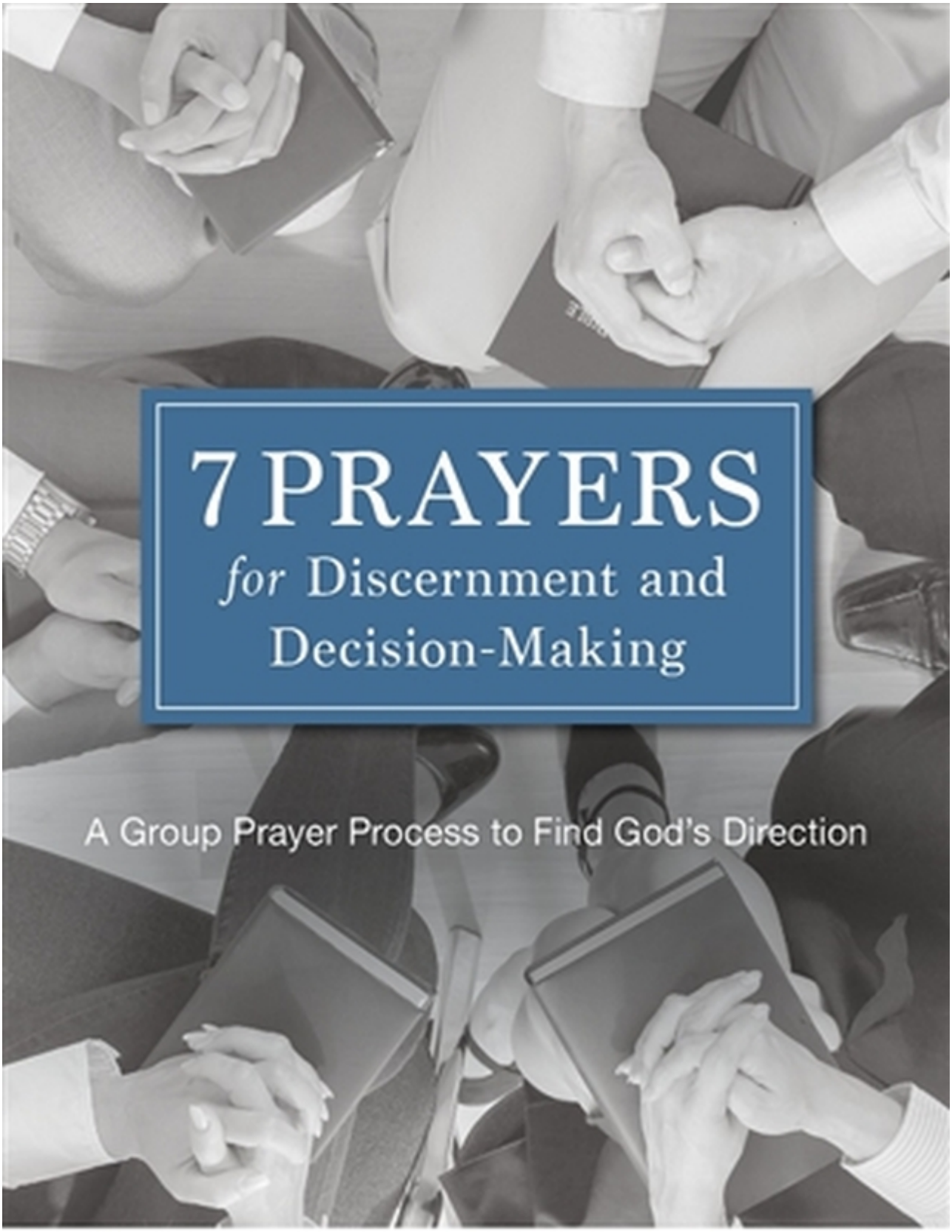
Some of Kim's Books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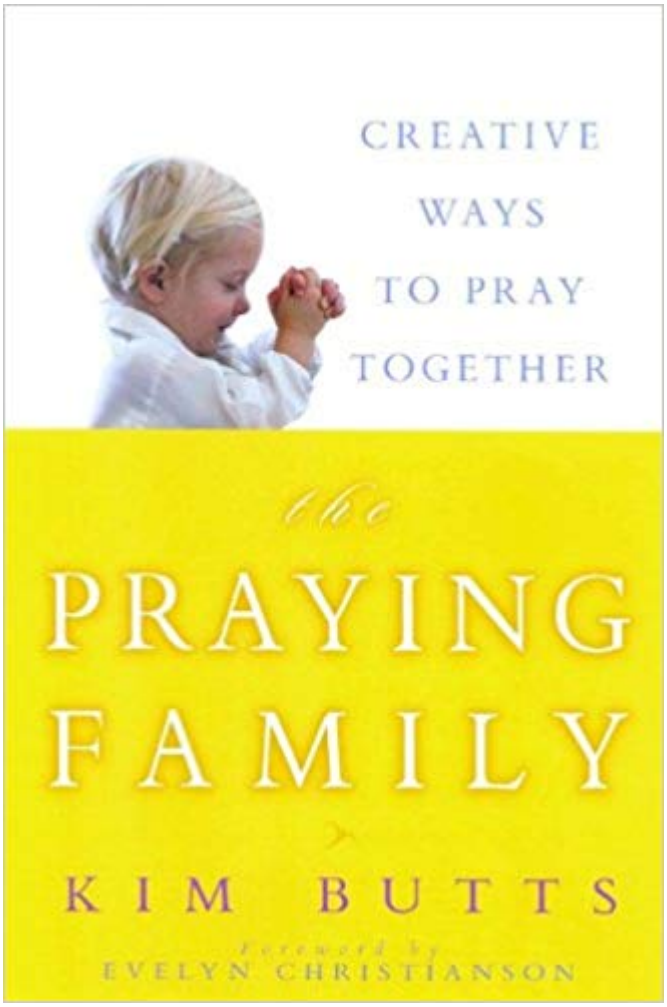
A Group Prayer Process to Find God's Direction

KIM BUTTS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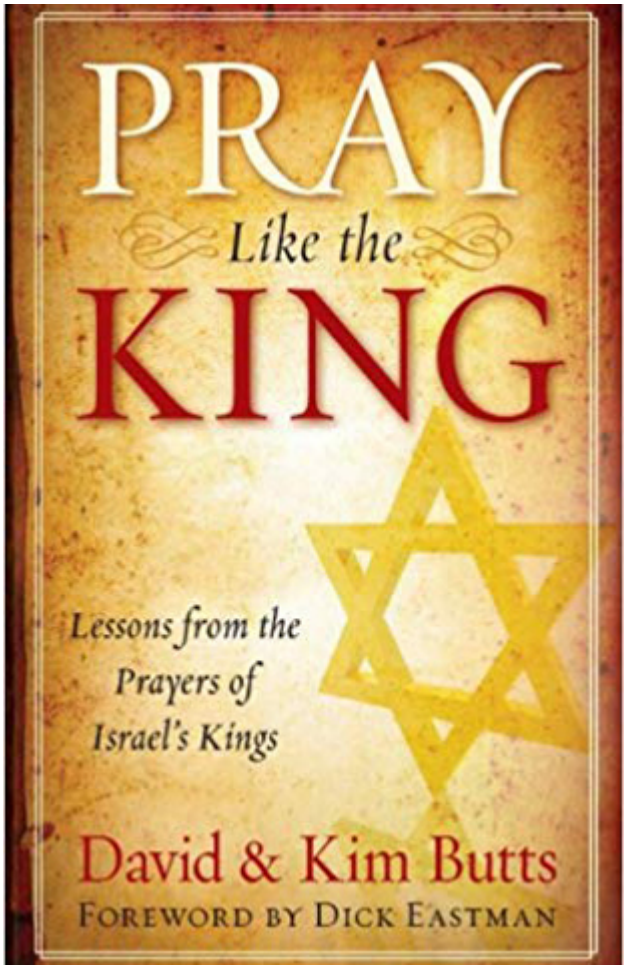
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David & Kim Butts
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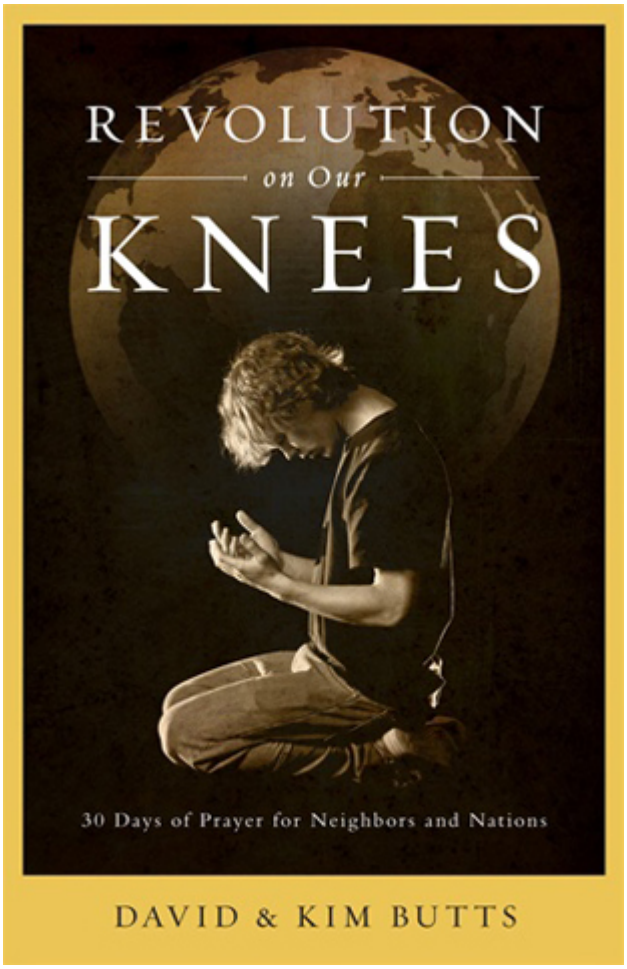
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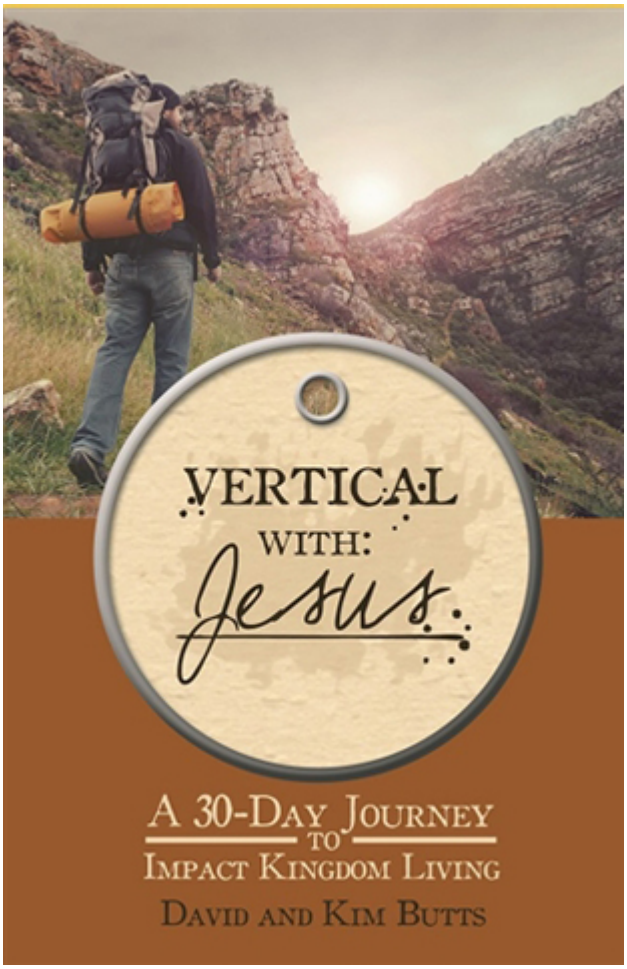
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David and Kim Butts

Prayer Power in the Church

Creating an Atmosphere for the Presence of Jesus

I love this statement from S.D. Gordon on the power of prayer: “The great people of the earth today are the people who pray! I do not mean those who talk about prayer; nor those who say they believe in prayer; nor those who explain prayer; but I mean those who actually take the time to pray. They have not time. It must be taken from something else. That something else is important, very important and pressing, but still, less important and pressing than prayer. There are people who put prayer first, and group the other items in life’s schedule around and after prayer. These are the people today who are doing the most for God in winning souls, in solving problems, in awakening churches, in supplying both men and money for mission posts, in keeping fresh and strong their lives far off in sacrificial service on the foreign field, where the thickest fighting is going on, and in keeping the old earth sweet a little while longer.”

I do not doubt that there is still spiritual power in the Church today. Lives are being transformed by the preaching of the Gospel. The Church is still being used by God today to make a difference. But, there is so much more that could be happening! When we look at the first believers in Jerusalem, the difference in levels of power is obvious. It comes down to a biblical principle written by the James, the brother of Jesus: “You do not have because you do not ask God” (James

4:2)

As we move toward the end of the age, the Church must face the fact that it is only through the power of God that we will be able to stand against the onslaught of ungodliness that will come against us. As important as our words are, by themselves they are and will be insufficient. The Apostle Paul was very concerned that those who heard him would not just hear words, but see the power of God at work. “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.” (I Cor.2:4) When the Church begins to pray, we will once again see that demonstration of the Spirit’s power. “God shapes the world by prayer. The more prayer there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil …” E.M. Bounds

Adapted from *Forgotten Power* by David Butts, PrayerShop Publishing 2016.

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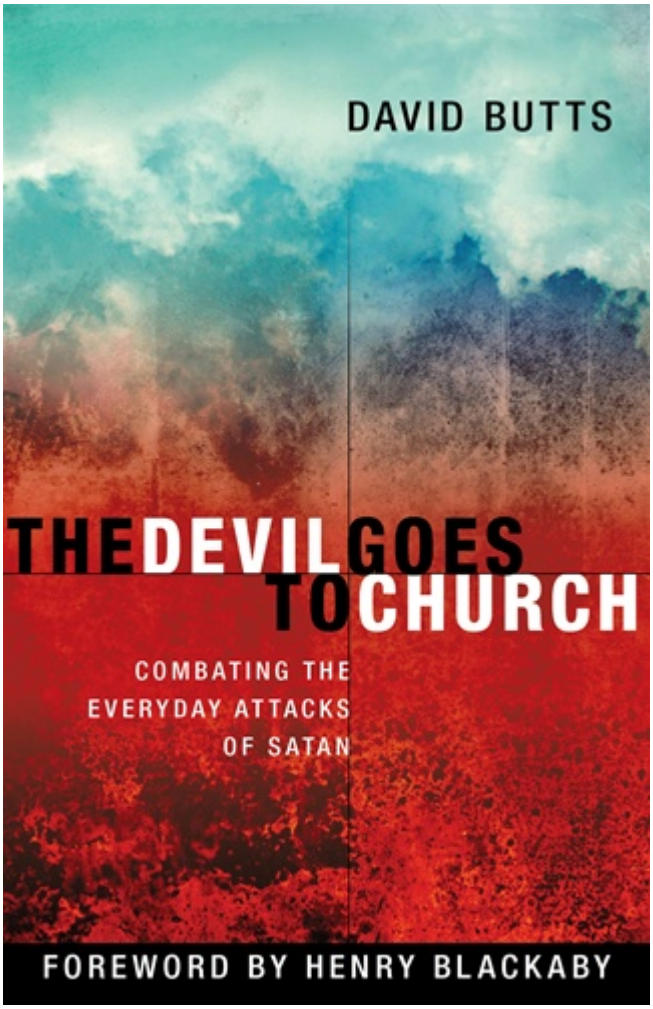
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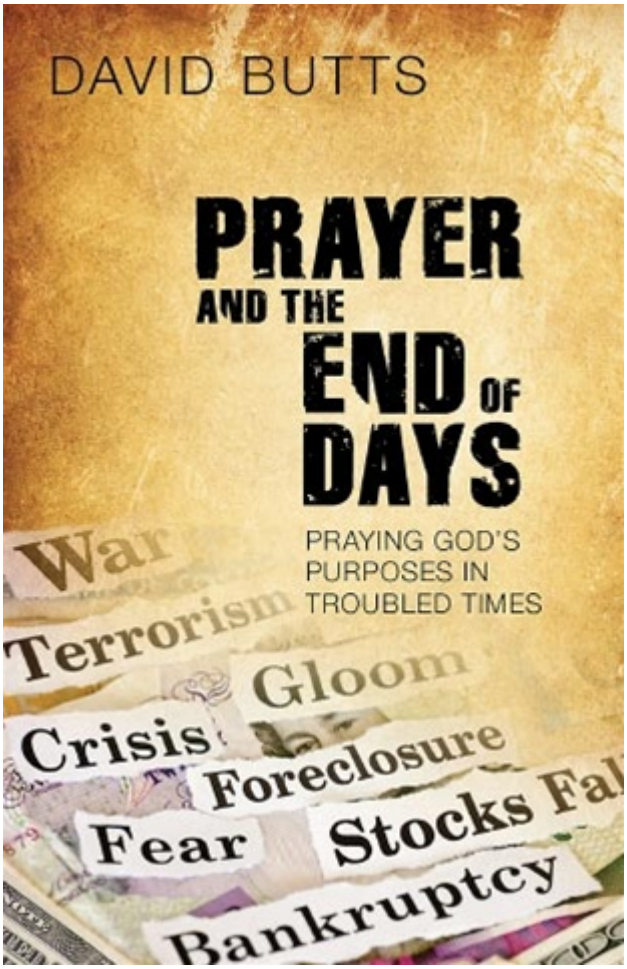
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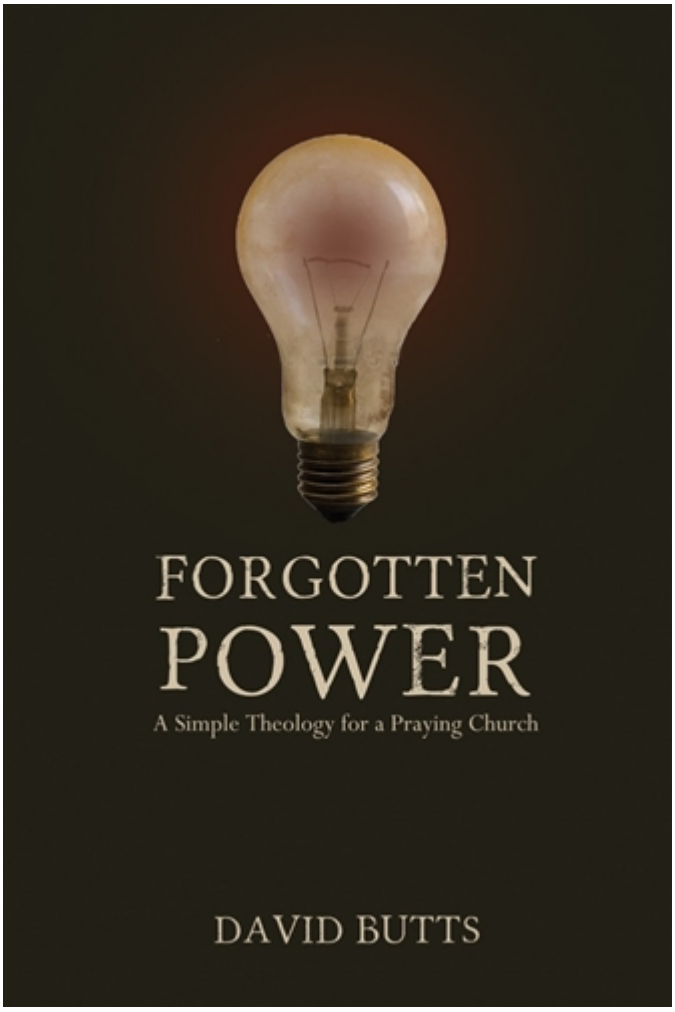
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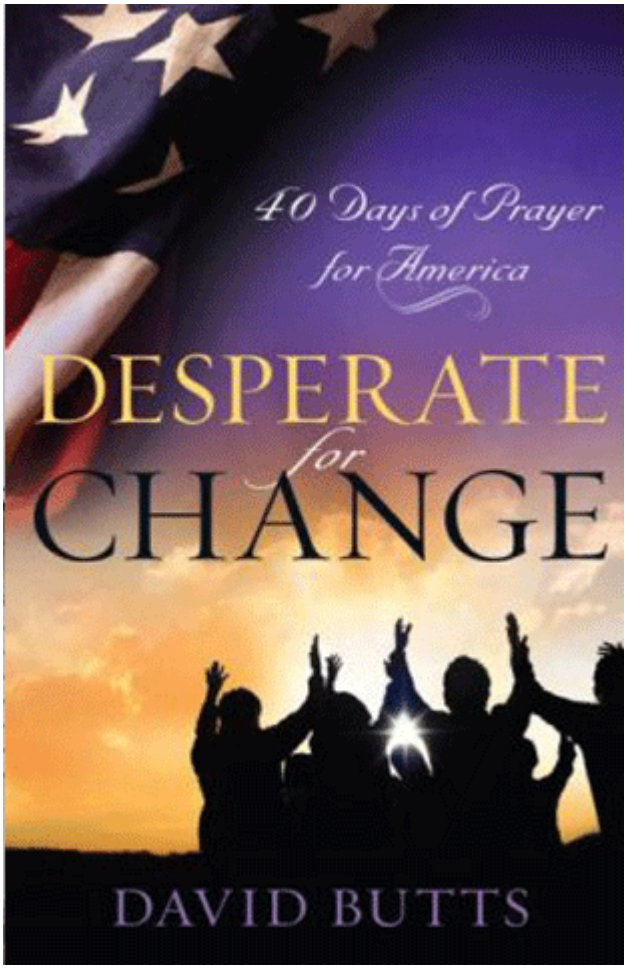
A Simple Theology for a Praying Church
DAVID BUTTS


40 Days of Prayer
for America
DESPERATE
for
CHANGE
DAVID BUTTS

Are You Zealous for God?

Creating an Atmosphere for the Presence of Jesus

When you hear the word “zealot” what do you think of? Fanatic? Weird? Overly religious? Maybe an extremely emotional person? I think that most people would say of zeal that it’s just not who they are. Many people have a tendency to identify being zealous as an overly emotional or extreme personality type and would distance themselves from being labeled a “zealot.”

The Bible, however, looks at zeal not so much as an emotion, but as an expression of faith. You become zealous because you have come to know God. It is the awesome character and nature of God that creates zeal within those who worship Him. The more you know the Lord, the more you become zealous for him.

From this perspective, zealousness is more about earnestness toward God, consecration, and undivided service. To be zealous is to focus all our attention on one thing…or rather, one person…the person of Jesus Christ. Perhaps most important for followers of Jesus, to be zealous is not an option but a command. Consider these scriptures which speak of a zealous life:

- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5).
- “Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart” (Ps.119:2).
- “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on

your own understanding” (Prov.3:5).

- “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer.29:13).
- “Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning” (Joel 2:12).

The greatest example of zeal is the One who knows the Father the best, our Lord Jesus. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the zeal of Jesus in Is.59:17: “He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.” In the gospels, John wrote: “His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me”’ (Jn.2:17). Following in the steps of Jesus means becoming as zealous as He is.

Living the Christian life is not a casual attachment to religious activities. It is an all-out, loving desire to walk with Jesus day by day. With single-minded passion we draw near to Him and serve him with everything that is in us. Our prayer life moves from mundane requests to zealously seeing the purposes of God brought to earth by our cries of intercession. May it be said of us, as was said of our Lord, “Zeal for your house will consume us!”

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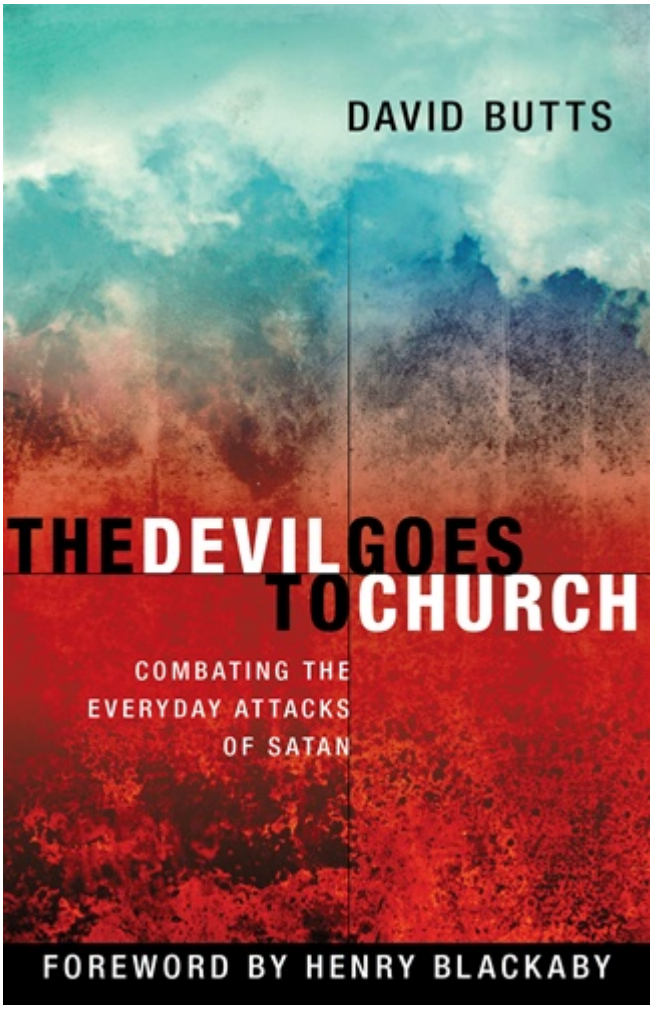
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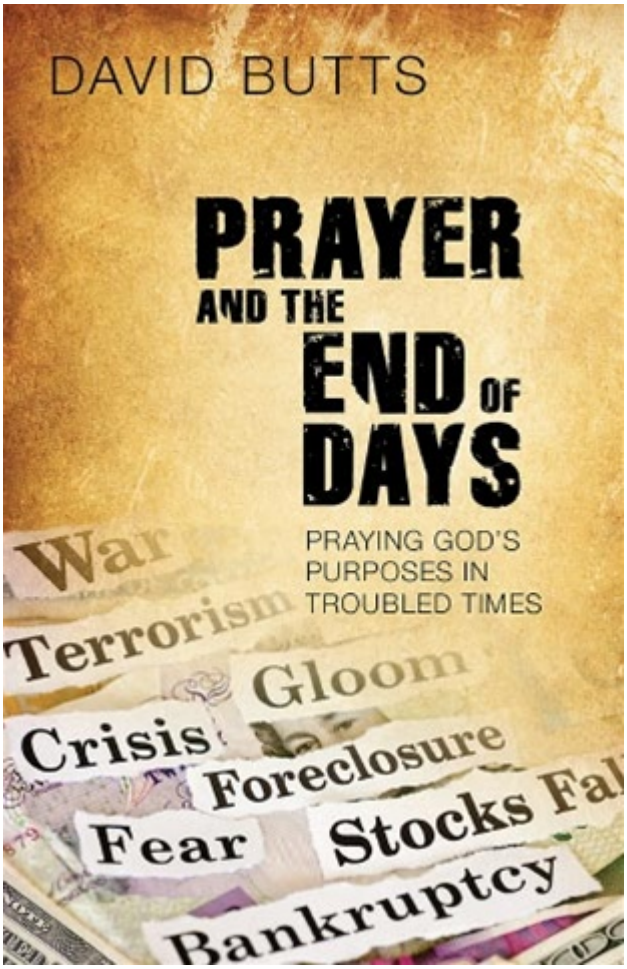
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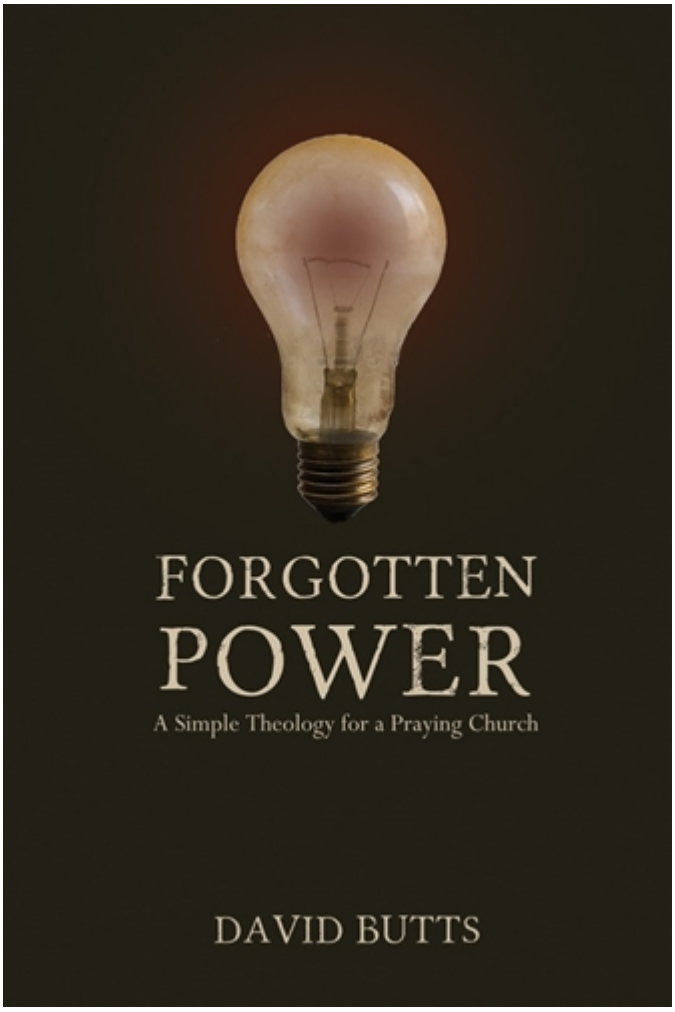
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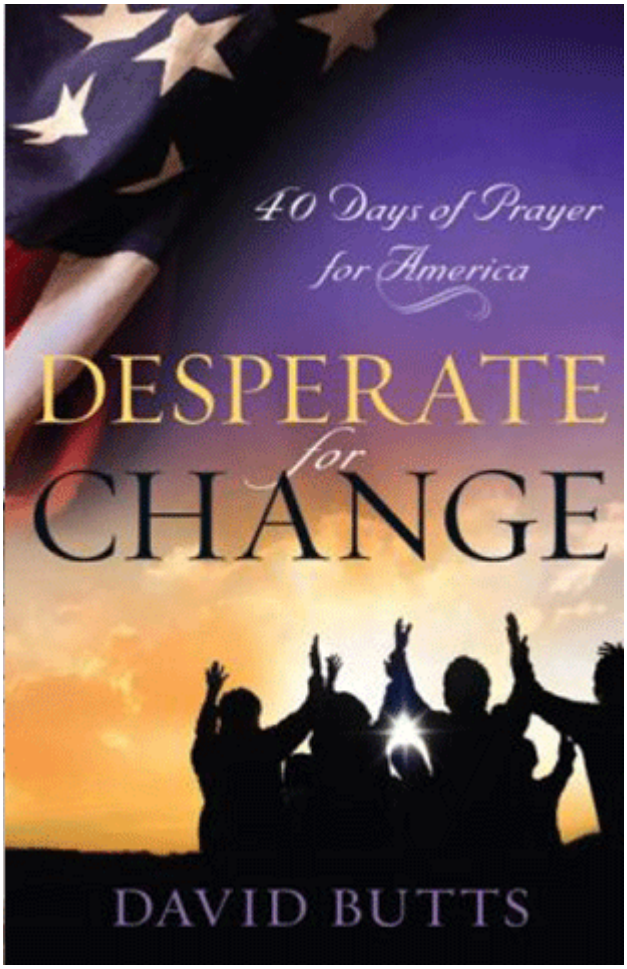
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When God Shows Up For Church

Dave Butts

Christians around the world are praying for revival. What exactly is meant by "revival"? Some think in terms of great meetings or tremendous evangelistic outreach. Others think more in terms of Christians who are encouraged and brought to a new level of commitment in their faith. Certainly Christians should be praying for revival, but what is it we are praying for and about?

Though many have given good definitions of revival, I still like this simple little description: Revival happens when God shows up for church. In a real sense, the Lord is always present when His people gather in His Name. But all too often His presence goes unnoticed. This definition recognizes the fact that when the people of God become aware of the Presence of the Lord, everything changes. Our worship services, our family lives, our evangelistic efforts, and our individual devotional lives will all be different when God shows up for church.

The Bible teaches us the amazing fact that God has come to dwell in us through His Holy Spirit. The Old Testament name given to the Messiah was Emmanuel…God with us. Colossians 1:27 teaches us the mystery of God – *"Christ in [us], the hope of glory."* Jesus said, *"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him"* (John 14:23). The Lord also made it clear that when two or more are gathered together, He would be there in our midst.

Much as the temple or the tabernacle in the Old Testament was

a place where the Presence of God was manifest on earth, so now the gathered Church becomes a place where His Presence is known. Our theology is clear on that fact. Unfortunately, our experience normally fails to match up to our theology. Most churches meet for worship, teaching and fellowship and leave again without truly being aware of God in their midst.

Praying for revival is praying for open eyes among the people of God. Lord, help us to see Jesus! Open the eyes of our hearts that we might know You and become aware of Your Presence here in our lives.

The experience of Israel under the leadership of Moses is a great teacher for the Church today as we cry out to God for revival. My friend, Terry Teykl, wrote a powerful book entitled *The Presence Based Church*. He writes, "As a result of their unique relationship with God, the Israelites became the original Presence based people. Under the leadership of Moses, and at God's bidding, they made the Presence the axis of their lives.

"The Ark of the Covenant was always located in the tabernacle at the very center of the camp. The 12 tribes were divided into four groups and stationed symmetrically around the Presence: three to the north, three to the south, three to the east, and three to the west. By day they saw the cloud that hung over the tent, and by night they would lie in the entrance to their own tents and watch the fire. As long as the Presence stayed, they stayed. But when the Presence moved, they followed. They were Presence led and Presence drawn" (Pg.89).

In Exodus 33, verses 13-17, there is a fascinating conversation between the Lord and Moses concerning His Presence. *"The LORD replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'"* Then Moses said to Him, *"If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that You are pleased with me and with Your*

people unless You go with us? What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" The Lord replied, *"I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."*

Moses understood how critical it was for Israel to stay with the Presence of God. When the Church today grabs hold of that fact, we will see revival. When the Church, like Moses, commits to going only where the Lord leads, then we will be making progress. It is time for us to cry out for the Lord to make us aware of His Presence.

Teykl offers great insight as to the effects of the manifest Presence of God:

"Where His Presence is being manifested, God's glory is evident. When the Presence fell on the Mercy Seat of the Ark, His glory filled the tabernacle to such an extent that no one could go near. His Presence was noticeable. Think about it. If God were to manifest His Presence in your church, shouldn't it be just as noticeable as it was in the tabernacle? Is not God that same God that descended in the Holy Place and rested among His chosen people in fire and cloud? Is He not the same God who, from the Mercy Seat, displayed His power and authority, guided and governed the Israelites, gave them victory over their enemies, demonstrated His favor and love, established His uniqueness and offered atonement for sin?

"Where God's Presence is being manifested today, the same results are evident. Humility and uncommon zeal characterize people of the Presence because they have seen His power and know of His authority in the earth. Where the Presence is, wisdom and peace prevail through His guidance. Pathways become clear and sound decisions are made. In the Presence, people gain victory over habits or emotions that have held them captive for years. Relationships are healed, lives are transformed, joy is evident and the powers of darkness are forced to retreat. In the Presence, many call on the name of

Jesus and are saved in response to the wave of supernatural love and grace that penetrates their spirits" (Pg.201).

Does that sound a bit like revival to you? It does to me. I'm praying for an increased hunger for His Presence in my life, my family, and my church. As God answers that prayer, we will begin to see an increased awareness of the activity of the Lord in the midst of His people. Join me in praying for God to "show up for church."

(c) Harvest Prayer Ministries

-Dave Butts is the president of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the author of several books.

Your Church's Prayer Room – Is it Pretty…or Powerful?

Creating an Atmosphere for the Presence of Jesus

After being in prayer ministry for many years, I have been in hundreds of prayer rooms in churches of every stripe. There are three basic types or prayer rooms I would like to address today:

- **The Prayer/Storage Room**– this is a "prayer room" that shares space and is not fully dedicated to the purpose of prayer. In many cases, it is used for sound equipment, stage props, Christmas decorations…well, you

get the idea. This tells me that a church is definitely not “all in” about becoming a praying church. To be fair, many churches simply don’t have any discretionary space, as prayer rooms usually aren’t in the initial plans when churches build. Church leadership hasn’t yet recognized that prayer is the strategy for the life and mission of the church. People who want to pray in these spaces are often resentful about sharing with those who would use the space for storage and vice versa. Hurt feelings and disunity can be a result of this arrangement.

- **The Pretty Prayer Room**– this room has been designated as the “place for prayer” in the church. A team of people have put in nice furniture, lovely artwork, etc. But…it isn’t used except on Sunday mornings before church or special and infrequent times of prayer. This room is often confiscated for meetings other than prayer because it is a nice, quiet setting and not utilized very much. Churches feel good because they “have” a prayer room. To this I have to say, “What good is a pretty prayer room that isn’t being used for prayer?” One or more people in the church have created a space for their community of believers to come and pray, but find that the congregation and sometimes even the leaders are enticed to other activities in the church building other than prayer. This can be very discouraging for those who have prepared the room as they are often the only ones who use it. Very few other than those who are already gifted in intercession place value in spending time here.

Both of these first two rooms are usually only accessible when the church building is open or during special times of emphasis on prayer. The life of God working mightily in the midst of His people here may be less than it could be because His people are not yet focused upon the critical necessity of seeking His presence both individually and corporately.

- **The Power Prayer Room**– kingdom activity happens in this prayer space! People are continually coming and going, creativity is being cultivated, all generations are engaged, and God is receiving much glory as He launches people into His purposes in homes, in the church, the community and around the world. This prayer space is open and available often…sometimes even around the clock for intentional worship and intercession. It can even be a room with an outside access available by keypad or some other arrangement so that people can seek God 24-7. I have seen small prayer rooms built on church property or some other designated location rather than located in the church building. It is in such spaces that God is pouring out blessing and answering prayer. His people are His hands and feet in their homes and community, and actively sharing the love of the gospel. These people are being transformed by Jesus because they are drawing near and pressing into His presence.

By the way, very rarely is the Power Prayer room "pretty" although it certainly can be! It may actually be a bit messy because people are doing the work of prayer. You might see prayer stations that engage the different senses, maps of the nations on the wall, people drawing or painting their prayers, places to kneel, people worshiping (worship IS prayer)…children are welcome in this space and there are age-appropriate prayer stations for them to seek God…and that just scratches the surface.

Is a prayer room an absolute necessity for a church to become a praying church? Absolutely not! But it is often an entry place for many people to learn to stretch and grow in prayer. There is something about coming to a designated place of prayer that invites people to draw apart from the world in order to meet with God. It is a place where individuals, families, small groups or prayer teams can gather to learn how to seek His face and where God is welcome to breathe into the

lives of those who desire His presence: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8a); “…these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7).

A good way for the leadership of a church to allow people to grow in their life with God is to provide a space where they can learn how to intercede for more than personal needs and issues and be stretched towards God’s kingdom purposes through prayer.

For more information about creative prayer rooms and for ideas, check out my Pinterest pages:

Prayer Room Ideas

Creative Prayer Ideas

Prayer and Missions Ideas

Kids and Prayer Ideas

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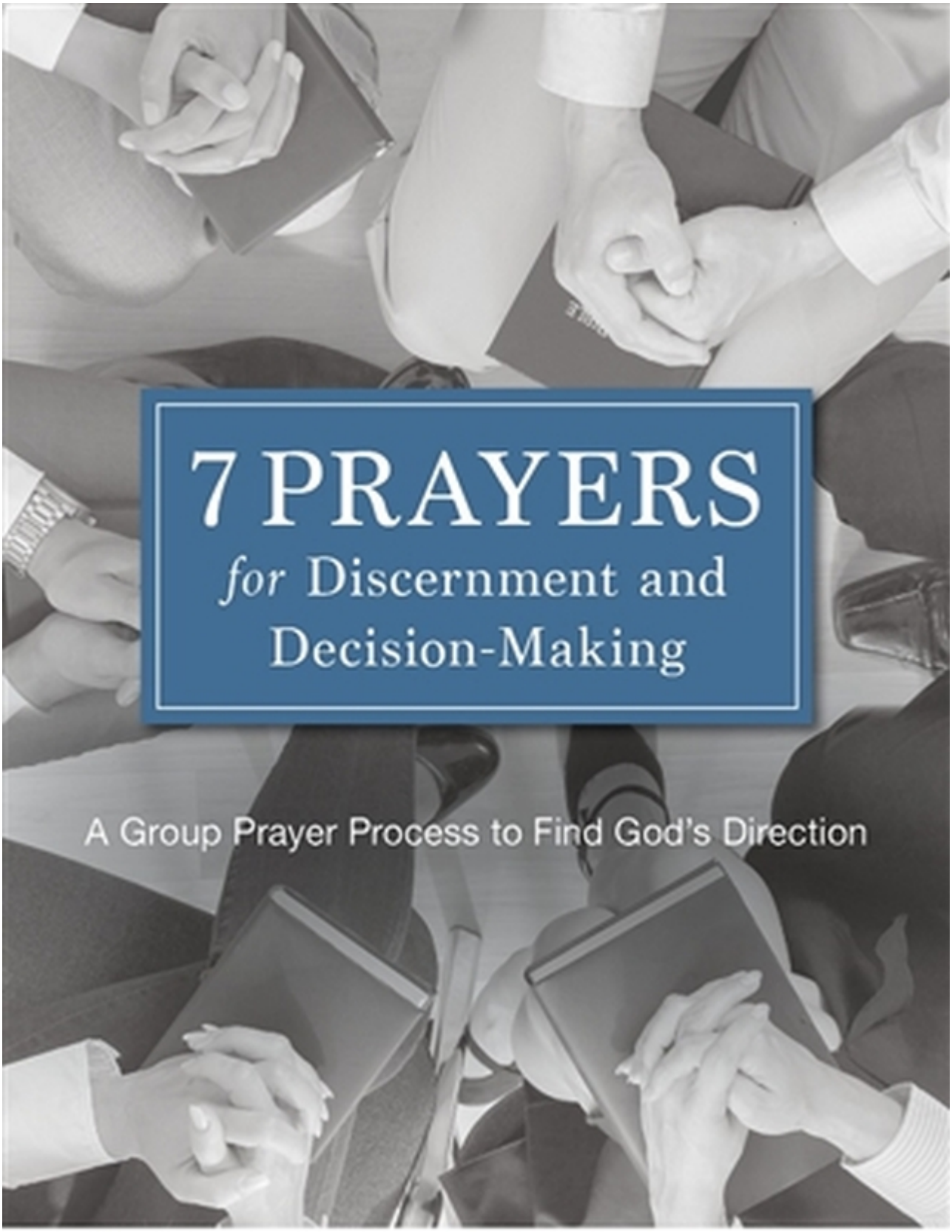
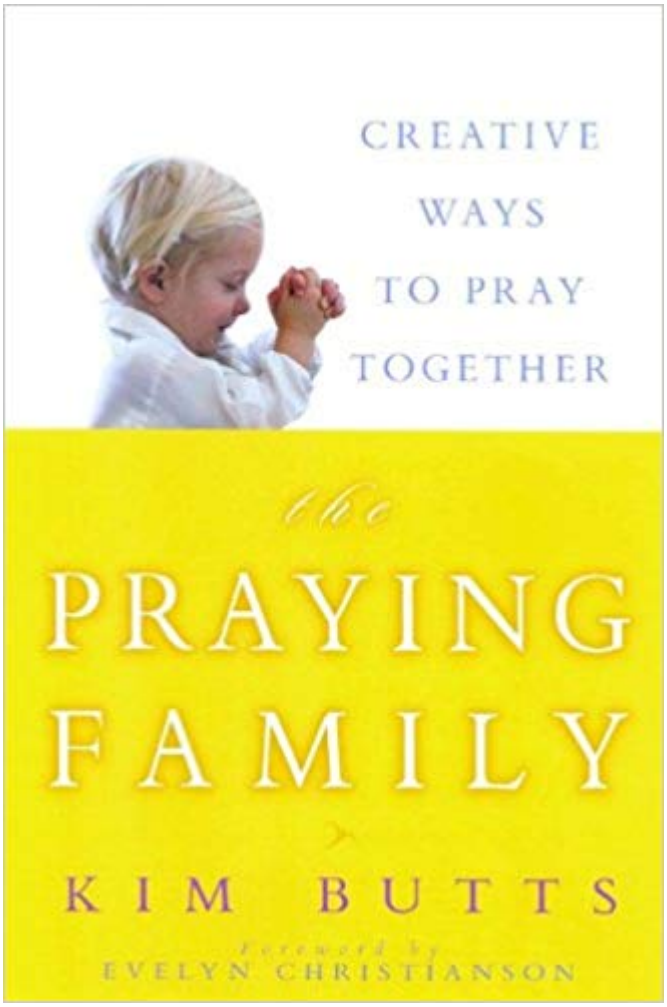
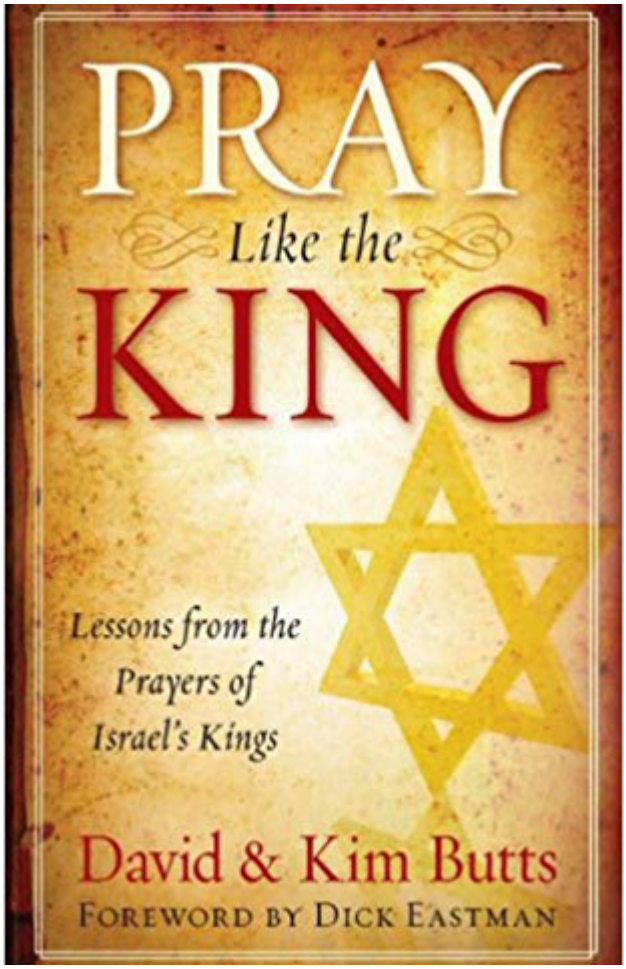
Kim has a BA in Psychology and a Masters degree in Spiritual Formation and Leadership.

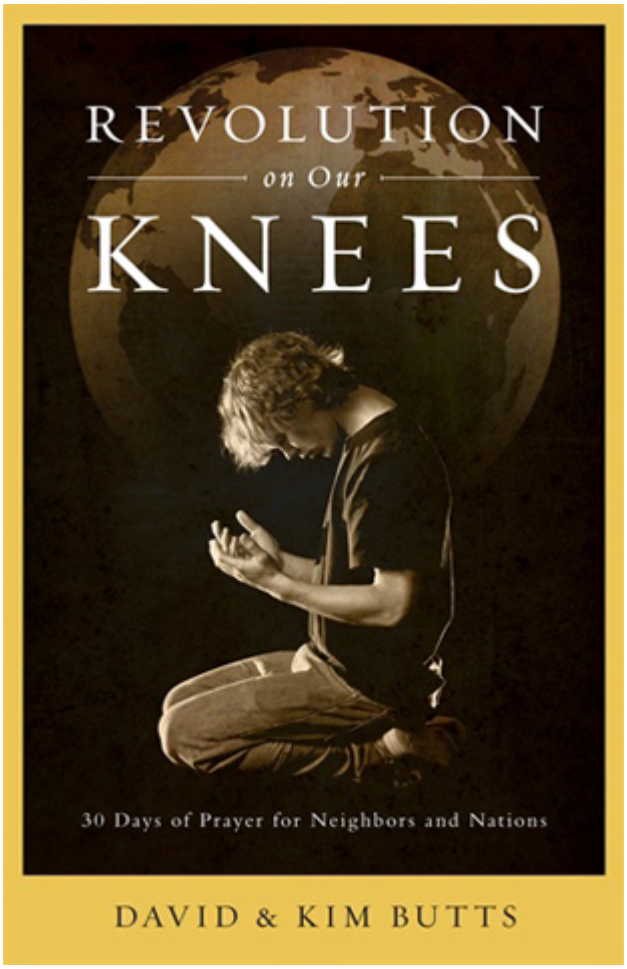
Some of Kim's Books

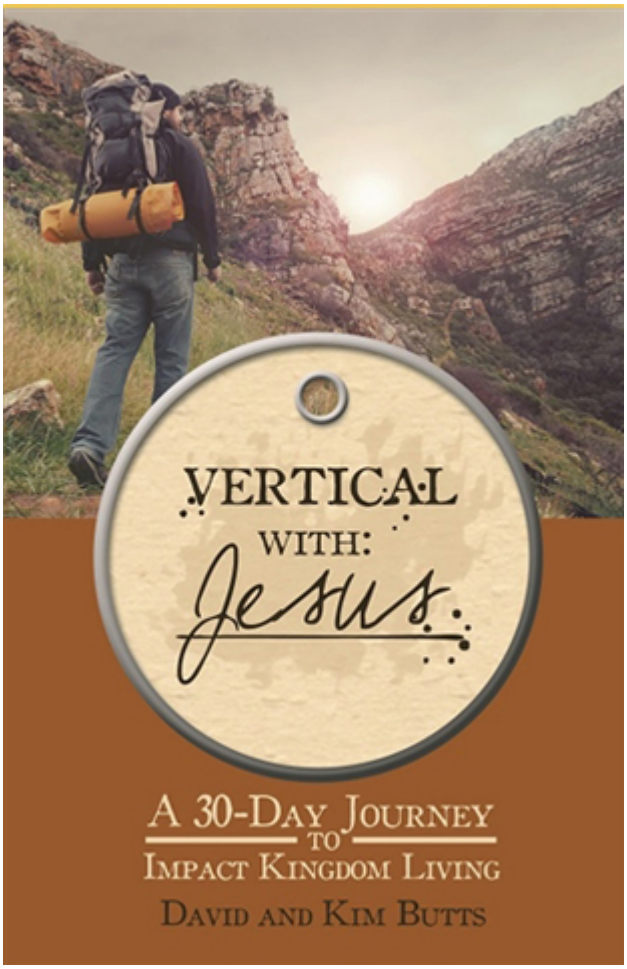

7 PRAYERS
for Discernment and
Decision-Making
A Group Prayer Process to Find God's Direction

KIM BUTTS


CREATIVE
WAYS
TO PRAY
TOGETHER
the
PRAYING
FAMILY
KIM BUTTS
Foreword by
EVELYN CHRISTIANSON


PRAY
Like the
KING
Lessons from the
Prayers of
Israel's Kings
David & Kim Butts
FOREWORD BY DICK EASTMAN


REVOLUTION
on Our
KNEES
30 Days of Prayer for Neighbors and Nations
DAVID & KIM BUTTS


VERTICAL
WITH:
Jesus
A 30-Day Journey
to
Impact Kingdom Living
David and Kim Butts