

PRAYER-EMPOWERED SERVICE



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by [Kim Butts](#)

Keeping a Kingdom focus is difficult when circumstances get tough, when we get discouraged, or when we simply get tired and worn down. Yet, we all know of people who epitomize Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." What makes the difference in those who can work tirelessly in thankless and/or tedious service to others...and those who "give up"?

When asked how she could work day in and day out caring for and loving the "poorest of the poor," Mother Teresa simply answered, "I pray." Her life example, as well as intentional teaching of others who worked with her, was to develop a

consistent life of prayer. It was her observation that well-meaning people could sustain work such as she did among lepers in Calcutta and with the poor in many places of the world, for perhaps a year or two at best. However, those who willingly and joyfully pressed into difficult work for God's kingdom day after day, year after year with joyful hearts could only be sustained by an unwavering moment by moment, constant and unflinching prayer life.

The transformational work of God that enables us to do "small things with great joy" (Mother Teresa) which have significant impact on lives, families, communities and beyond, are fueled by connectivity with the Father who gives us the strength to do all things! Nurturing holy habits of prayer are paramount to the endurance needed to run the race set before us. Trying to do so in our own enthusiasm and strength only sets us up for failure. It means the work is based only upon what we, in our humanness, are able to do rather than what God in His holiness and power can do through us.

One prayer habit that has been most helpful to me is an ancient one. It is called the Prayer of Examen. Scripture says much about examining ourselves and opening ourselves up to the Lord's examination. Here are two such verses of many: "When you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent" (Psalm 4:4). "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). The Prayer of Examen is a prayer practice in which God examines our hearts, minds and motives. As I have tried to make this more of a habit in my every day prayer life, I've discovered that the Holy Spirit has more of an opening to do a deep work in me...to purify my heart and life of those things which distract and deter me from living more fully for the sake of Jesus and His kingdom.

The Prayer of Examen is a powerful way to experience God in all things by intentionally thinking carefully about your day

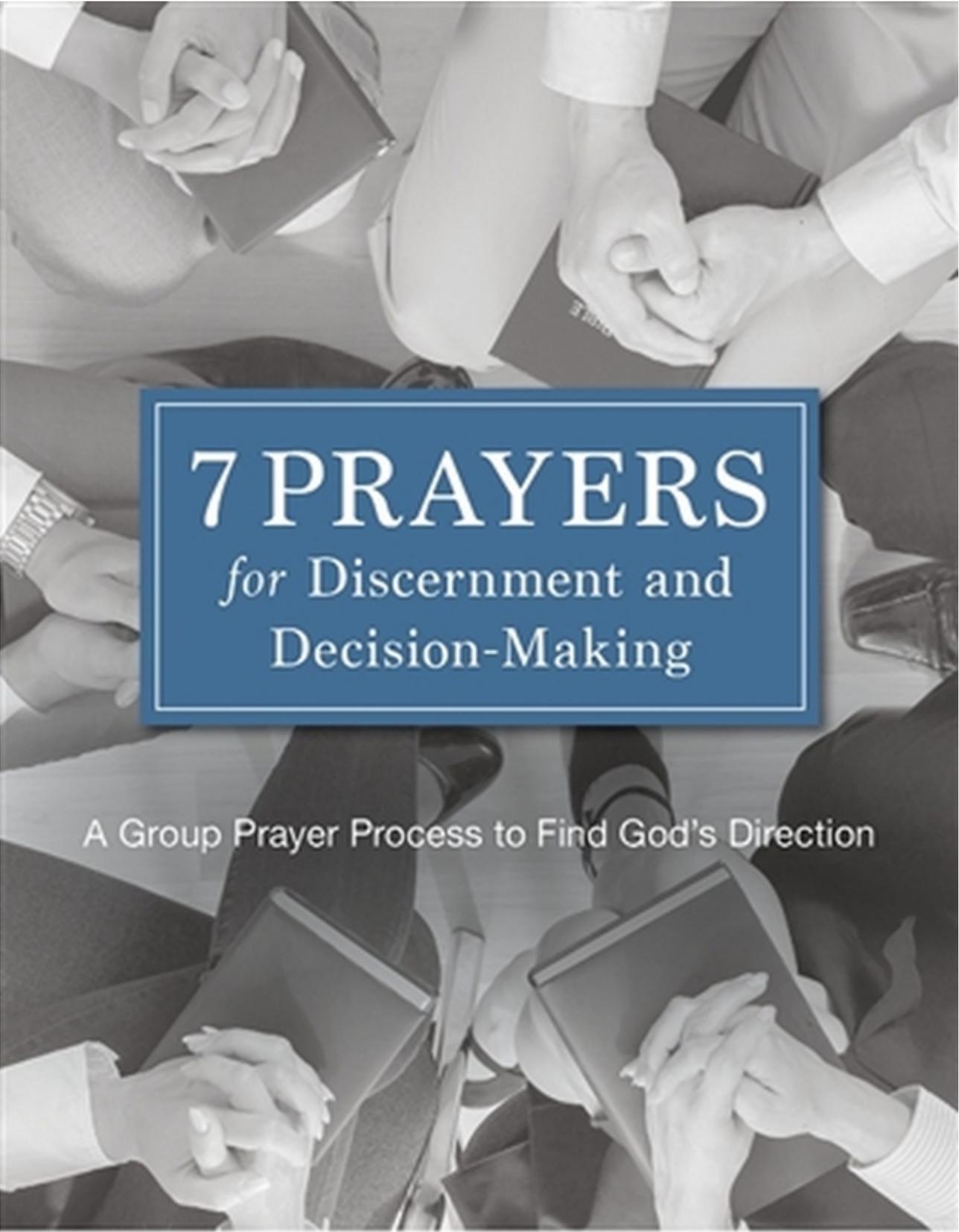
before going to sleep. Here are some helpful steps:

1. Bring to your mind as much as you can about what you did and thought about, what interactions you had with others, what things happened to you, etc. throughout the course of the day.
2. Think through all of the blessings you received and blessings you gave to others. Thank God for each one of them in turn, giving yourself opportunity to be truly grateful.
3. Consider all of the good you might have done but didn't because you were too busy, missed the opportunity, were too afraid or uncertain, etc. Take time to confess those sins of omission to God with a repentant heart.
4. Repent of every unloving or unkind action including angry or harsh words that were spoken to others. Be still for a few moments and ask the Father to help you to consider how you could act in more loving ways and how you might make right any situation in which someone else was hurt or harmed by your actions or words.

Prayerfully taking inventory of your day allows you to learn how live more fully for Jesus and to serve Him in Christ-like ways. Taking this posture of humility on a consistent daily basis will give you the spiritual tools and strength to step more fully into God's kingdom purposes for your life.

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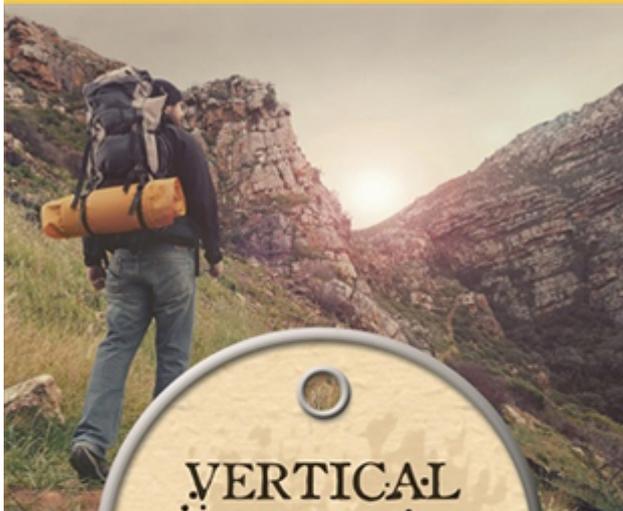


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