

# THE DISCIPLINE OF SOLITUDE IN EVERYDAY LIFE



## THE DISCIPLINE OF SOLITUDE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

by [Kim Butts](#)

Over the past several months, I have found myself longing for more opportunities for solitude...for time with God that for this season of my life seemingly can only be found in the peaceful, set apart spaces. More than a quiet time, more than sitting alone in silence for a few minutes of the day...I need to make room for unhurried stillness so I can just be...and so I can hear God's voice with greater clarity.

I have taken a couple of retreats that involved complete

solitude for long stretches...even several days...and I struggled. I am a people person...my thoughts go wild even when I intentionally purpose to take each one captive! What, I wondered, unnerves me so much about leaving the familiarity of people, my busy life and technology to fix my full attention upon God?

But then I read a passage from a compilation of Henri Nouwen's prayerful life, *The Only Necessary Thing*, which has transformed my hesitancy into an urgent expectancy:

"Although the discipline of solitude asks us to set aside time and space, what finally matters is that our hearts become like quiet cells where God can dwell, wherever we go and whatever we do. The more we train ourselves to spend time with God and God alone, the more we will discover that God is with us at all times and in all places. Then we will be able to recognize God even in the midst of a busy and active life. Once the solitude of time and space has become a solitude of the heart, we will never have to leave that solitude. We will be able to live the spiritual life in any place and any time. Thus the discipline of solitude enables us to live active lives in the world, while remaining always in the presence of the living God."

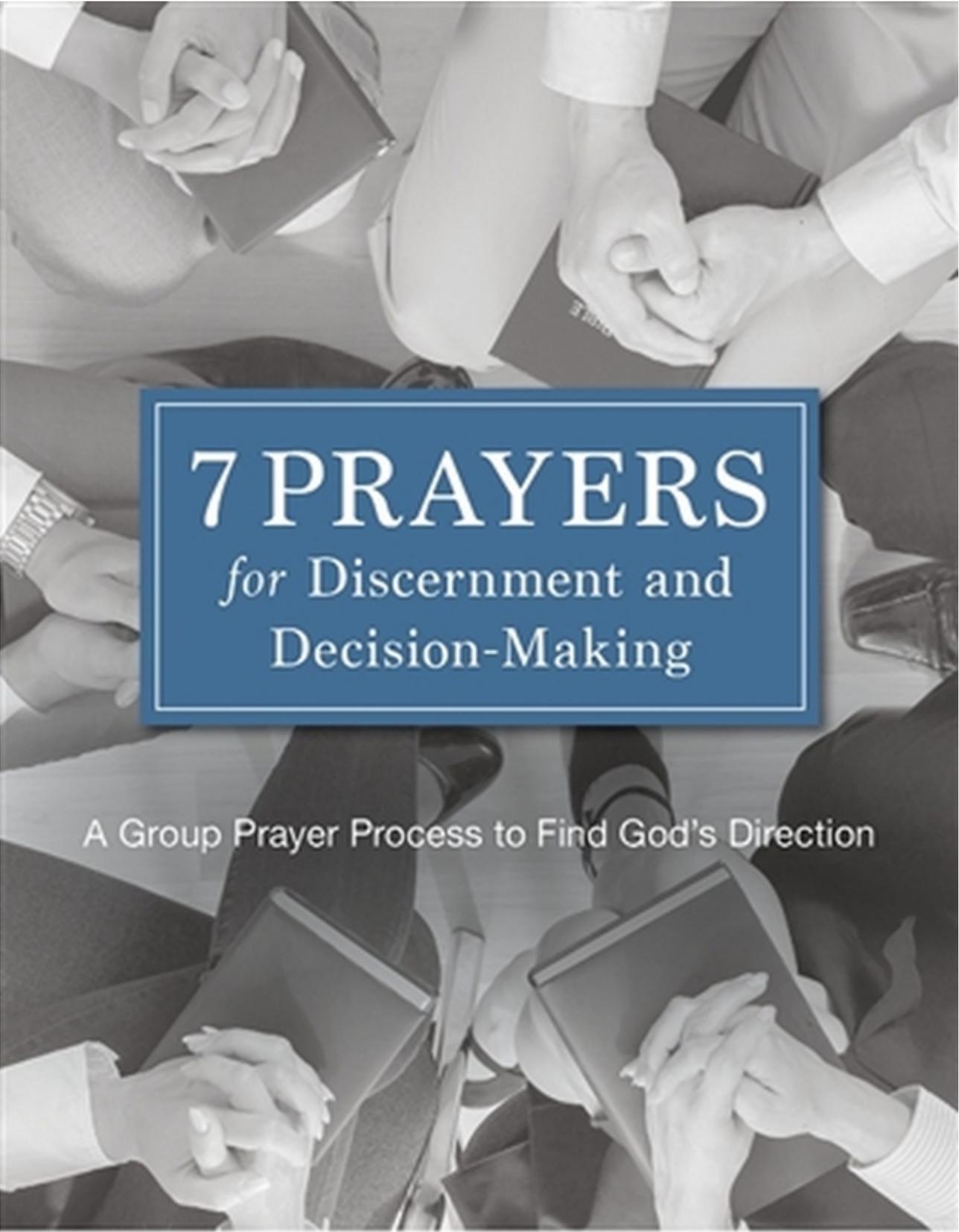
What first gripped me was the imagery of my heart becoming like a quiet cell (I imagined one that I was housed in at a retreat center a few years ago) where God can dwell. I began to ask the question, "What could I learn about myself through the discipline of solitude that would inform my everyday life in the way Nouwen describes?" My prayer is that solitude becomes a hospitable place in which to posture my heart before Jesus. I want to journey into the discipline of solitude and what God might be pleased to teach me there. Currently, this is an expression of desire only as I seek God's face for the way forward.

Father, allow my heart to become a quiet cell where You are

welcome to dwell. Transform my everyday life so that I may always remain in Your presence, no matter what is going on around me or within me.

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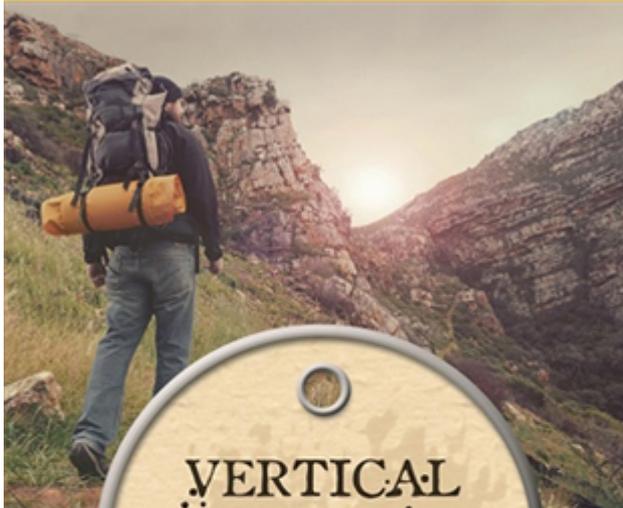
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