

JULY 2025 PRAYER SERVICE

The Bible discusses discernment in various contexts, emphasizing its importance for believers. Here is a breakdown of relevant scriptures.

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Old Testament

- **Sirach:** This book highlights **the value of seeking counsel and praying for guidance to discern the right path**. It emphasizes testing oneself and avoiding what is harmful, as not everything is good for everyone. Sirach also notes that the mind is the root of conduct, giving rise to both good and evil.

New Testament

- **Matthew:** This Gospel warns against false prophets who appear harmless but are destructive. Believers are called to recognize them by their actions ("fruits"). It also emphasizes that merely claiming to follow Jesus is insufficient; **faithful followers do the will of God**.
- **1 Timothy:** This letter cautions against those who abandon the faith, following deceitful spirits and teachings. It mentions liars whose consciences are seared and who promote prohibitions against marriage and certain foods. **The letter affirms that everything created by God is good** and should be received with thanksgiving.
- **2 Timothy:** This letter warns that people will turn away from sound doctrine and seek teachers who cater to their desires. Believers are urged to **remain sober, endure suffering, and diligently carry out their ministry**.

Discernment and the Holy Spirit

- **Guidance of the Spirit:** The Bible teaches that **the Holy Spirit guides believers in making decisions of conscience**. Discerning involves examining, under the Spirit's guidance, what is better and perfect in each situation. Believers are encouraged to be sensitive to the Spirit's voice within them, enabling them to choose the most appropriate course.
- **Acts of the Apostles:** This book documents moments where the early Church community discerned the will of the risen Lord. The Holy Spirit leads and directs the Church. Examples include choosing seven reputable men to manage food distribution and discerning the mission to the Gentiles.

Additional Considerations

- **Athanasius of Alexandria:** He noted **the importance of discerning spirits to know whom to accept and reject**, emphasizing that Scripture is sufficient for understanding these matters.
- **Pope Francis:** He has emphasized that **discernment is a daily practice involving choices in all aspects of life**. He notes that **discernment isn't done alone and requires evaluating it in conjunction with the Word of God and Church doctrine to distinguish God's voice from others**.

- **Vigilance:** Vigilance is essential in discernment, as Jesus warned his disciples to be watchful so that the enemy does not nullify their efforts. **Presumption and lack of trust in God can open doors to evil.**
- **Discernment and Freedom:** Discernment involves hard work and requires individuals to **evaluate and choose, as God created humans free and wants them to exercise their freedom.** God invites people to **assess their choices, which have consequences for themselves, others, and the world.**

Psalm 119 and Sirach 39 speak about discernment.

Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is a hymn that celebrates the beauty, saving power, and capacity for giving joy and life that comes from the word of God. The Psalmist asks God to teach him His statutes, to provide him with understanding, and to lead him in the path of His commandments. The Psalmist finds delight in God's decrees and meditates on God's law throughout the day. The Psalmist prays that God would turn his eyes away from vanities and give him life in His ways.

Sirach 39

Sirach 39 speaks of the man who seeks out the wisdom of the ancients and is concerned with prophecies. He seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables. He sets his heart to seek the Lord and asks pardon for his sins. If the Lord is willing, he will be filled with the Spirit of understanding.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE:

Sirach 39:1-11

*How different the person who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High!
He explores the wisdom of all the ancients and is occupied with the prophecies;
He preserves the discourses of the famous, and goes to the heart of involved sayings;
He seeks out the hidden meaning of proverbs, and is busied with the enigmas found in parables.
He is in attendance on the great, and appears before rulers.
He travels among the peoples of foreign lands to test what is good and evil among people.
His care is to rise early to seek the Lord his Maker, to petition the Most High, to open his mouth in prayer, to ask pardon for his sins.
If it pleases the Lord Almighty, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; He will pour forth his words of wisdom and in prayer give praise to the Lord.
He will direct his knowledge and his counsel, as he meditates upon God's mysteries.
He will show the wisdom of what he has learned and glory in the Law of the Lord's covenant.
Many will praise his understanding; his name can never be blotted out. Unfading will be his memory; through all generations his name will live.
Peoples will speak of his wisdom, and the assembly will declare his praise.
While he lives he is one out of a thousand, and when he dies he leaves a good name.*

A TIME OF SILENT MEDITATION:

SHARED PRAYER ON SCRIPTURAL TEXT:

The intent is reflection in the form of a prayer, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS:

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn, for example, "Lord, hear our prayer".

LITURGICAL PRAYER:

Psalm 119:1-16

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*Blessed those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with all their heart.
They do no wrong; they walk in his ways.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*You have given them the command to observe your precepts with care.
May my ways be firm in the observance of your statutes.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*Then I will not be ashamed to ponder all your commandments.
I will praise you with a sincere heart as I study your righteous judgments.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*I will observe your statutes; do not leave me all alone.
How can the young keep his way without fault? Only by observing your words.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*With all my heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments.
In my heart I treasure your promise, that I may not sin against you.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes.
With my lips I recite all the judgments you have spoken.
I find joy in the way of your testimonies more than in all riches.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

*I will ponder your precepts and consider your paths.
In your statutes I take delight; I will never forget your word.*

Response: Blessed those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord.

CONCLUSION OF PRAYER TIME:

ALL:

O Holy Spirit, Giver of all good gifts, I humbly come before you, seeking your divine guidance. Enlighten my mind, that I may know your will. Purify my heart, that I may love what is pleasing to you.

Please grant me the gift of discernment, that I may distinguish between good and evil, truth and falsehood, and your voice from all others.

Please help me to be vigilant, lest the enemy deceive me with empty promises. Fill me with wisdom, understanding, and counsel, that I may make choices that lead to salvation.

May I always seek your guidance in prayer and trust in your loving providence. Please grant me the courage to follow your path, even when it is difficult.

Through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

DEEP POOLING:

This is a time to share on more serious matters or when the input of the group is requested. This will not necessarily happen at all meetings.

SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS:

We join teams in order to enlist the help of others in growing closer to God. The “endeavors” are practices which we voluntarily assume. They have been found to be a means of drawing us closer as a couple and in furthering our spiritual growth. By sharing on the endeavors at the team meeting we seek help and encouragement from our teammates in our journey.