

Developing A Season of Spiritual Discernment

Devoting Space to Hear the Voice of God



1. Prayerfully, clearly & succinctly write down the question(s) being asked.

- **Before you write, spend an extended time in prayer & spiritual listening seeking God's guidance & clarity about the decision(s)/question(s).**
- **Write it in the form of a question (Is God leading us to plant churches? Is God leading this church to plant churches?).**
- **Write it down & edit it until it is as short and clear as possible. A sentence of less than 10 words is best.**
- **Be able to communicate it verbally with minimal qualification or explanation.**
- **Avoid compound questions. If more than one subject/topic is under question, write multiple statements rather than one compound statement.**

2. Prayerfully select an appropriate amount of time to devote to discerning God's leading.

- **Sometimes outside circumstances dictate a starting or stopping point (i.e. a deadline).**
- **Make it long enough to fully pray, study and meditate on all aspects of the question(s).**
- **Make it short enough to maintain urgency & anticipation of God's response.**
- **Make it long enough to allow yourself to go through various intermediate responses (i.e. your first impression may not be your final conclusion).**
- **Make it long enough to involve others in the process.**

3. Prayerfully invite other mature, discerning and trusted Christians to join you in this season of discernment.

- **It is important that you only invite others whom you know to be Christians of deep integrity and loving honesty. Having an ulterior motive may corrupt their input.**
- **You must genuinely anticipate that God may speak thru him/her/them (i.e. they may hear God speaking when you can't).**
- **You must learn to trust the voice of God as He speaks through the community (i.e. if several others whom you have invited into this season of discernment all seem to discern the same thing then listen closely - it may be God's way of speaking His wisdom into your life).**
- **By involving others in this season of discernment you counterbalance your own self-serving tendencies, your naiveté, your tendency toward denial or your tendency to do what feeds your ego.**
- **By involving others in this season of discernment you open yourself up to wisdom beyond your own maturity, study and experience.**

4. Develop a daily discipline of prayer, reading and contemplation and ask everyone to join you in the same prayer, reading & contemplation.

- **Develop a prayer, reading & contemplation calendar for the duration of the season of discernment. You may also want to include days of fasting and talking together.**
- **If there are several aspects to your question(s), assign a single aspect to each day along with a short Bible reading, 1-3 prayer points & a question for contemplation which directly connects your reading & prayer points with the larger question being discerned.**
- **Pick one day a week for the duration of the season of discernment to fast (if you choose to include fasting) from sun up to sundown. Meal times on those days are to be used to read, pray & listen.**

- **If so inclined, devote one day a week for the duration of the season of discernment to listening. This is otherwise known as the discipline of silence. On this day, rather than occupying your heart/mind with a specific reading or prayer points, simply devote 30 minutes or an hour to quietly listening to God in your inner being. Ask the question slowly & simply listen in your spirit for His voice. This time may be spent sitting in a secluded place, walking in a natural area, sitting at a coffee shop, etc.**
- **Give your discernment calendar to everyone who has committed to join you in this season of discernment.**

5. Avoid drawing conclusions too quickly.

- **God is not stressed about this. Avoid allowing anxiety to drive your process or conclusion.**
- **Near the end of the season of discernment, talk with and pray with everyone who has faithfully joined you. Ask a few open-ended questions but mostly listen. Invite them to share with you whatever they believe they have heard from God. Ask them specifically to tell you things they think you may not want to hear. This is the best way to ensure that your discernment is not merely affirming what you already want.**

6. Make a faithful decision.

- **Make a decision in faith, trusting that God will lead you through any mistaken interpretations.**
- **If you are still unsure, enter into another season with additional people joining you.**