



MISSION **ALIVE**

A Guide to Developing a Season of Spiritual Discernment

This guide provides a structured approach to finding clarity and direction when facing significant life choices. By dedicating a specific "season" to spiritual listening and reflection, you can move past immediate impulses and discover God's wisdom and guidance. Mission Alive offers you the following 6-step process:

1. Define Your Question Clearly and Simply

Before seeking answers, you must be clear about what you are asking. Spend time in prayer and quiet reflection to strip away the noise and find the core of your uncertainty.

- **Formulate a direct question:** Instead of vague thoughts, use a clear structure like, "Should I accept the new job offer in a different city?" or "Is it time for me to return to school for a graduate degree?"
- **Keep it brief:** Aim for a sentence of 10 words or less. For example: "Should I start my own freelance business this year?" or "When should I retire?" or "Is God calling me to something completely different?"
- **Avoid multi-part questions:** If you are weighing multiple things, break them down. Instead of asking "Should I move and also change careers?" ask "Is now the right time to move?" as a separate inquiry from the career question. Multi-part questions make it difficult to discern what you are hearing.

2. Choose a Specific Timeframe

Commit to a set period for this process. This prevents "analysis paralysis" while ensuring you don't rush into a decision. It also allows you to increase your spiritual focus for a limited period, which is more doable than for longer periods.

- **Balance urgency and depth:** Set a deadline that creates a sense of focus but allows for thorough investigation.
 - *Example: A 30-day season* for a career change or a **two-week season** for a smaller commitment like joining a new community organization.
- **Allow for emotional shifts:** Your first reaction is rarely your final conclusion. A longer period allows you to move through phases of excitement, doubt, and eventually, clarity.
- **Coordinate with others:** If your decision involves a team or family, ensure the timeframe allows everyone to contribute meaningfully.

3. Build a Team of Trusted Spiritual Partners

Seeking wisdom beyond your own perspective helps counterbalance personal biases and ego. Also, a community of mature spiritual friends will help you pay attention to God in ways outside your normal habits.

- **Select for integrity:** Choose people known for their honesty and lack of ulterior motives. You want spiritual partners who will tell you what they hear God saying, not just what you *want* to hear.

- *Example:* A spiritual mentor known for their deep prayer life or a mature spiritual member of your church who is known for their spiritual wisdom, or a close spiritual friend who has a history of speaking truth to you, whether you like it or not.
- **Value community insight:** If multiple people you trust independently hear God saying the same or similar thing, pay close attention—this is often a sign of God speaking through the community of believers.
- **Counteract your "blind spots":** Involving others helps you recognize when a choice might be driven by vanity, fear, or a desire for easy comfort rather than true growth. When you invite your discernment partners, ask them specifically to suspend their personal agenda for you and seek God's wisdom.

4. Establish a Daily Reflective Routine

Create a consistent contemplation practice to keep the question at the forefront of your heart and mind.

- **Create a "prayer and reflection calendar":** Assign specific sub-topics of your question to different days to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
 - *Example:* Monday: "How does this choice align with my long-term values?" Tuesday: "What are the financial implications?" Wednesday: "How will this affect my family?"
 - Include scripture passages you feel may have wisdom to be considered.
 - Share your prayer and reflection calendar with your discernment team.
- **Incorporate varied practices:** Identify practices like journaling, reading scripture, or intentional times of silence to gain new perspectives.
 - *Example:* Spend 30 minutes on a Saturday **walking in a natural area** or sitting in a quiet coffee shop without digital distractions, simply "listening" to the Holy Spirit regarding the question.
 - Asking your discernment team to keep a reflection journal for you and send you their reflections is a good way for them to focus specifically on your question.
- **Consider a "fast":** You might choose one day a week to step away from a specific habit (like eating, social media, or television) to reclaim that time for spiritual listening.

5. Practice Patience and Active Listening

It is natural to feel anxious when a decision is pending, but rushing the process often leads to regret.

- **Resist the urge to decide early:** Even if you feel certain on day five of a 30-day process, stick to the full timeline to see if that certainty holds up. If it is God's leading, God will continue to press that conclusion on you and on your team.

- **Gather feedback at the end:** Near the conclusion of your season, meet with your discernment team. Ask open-ended questions like, "What risks do you see that I might be ignoring?" or "What do you think I am most afraid of regarding this choice?"

Asking open-ended questions to your discernment team ensures that you do not inadvertently control their responses. As they answer, listen deeply and carefully. Resist the urge to contradict what they say. Ask follow-up questions and offer your own summation to check if you are understanding what they have heard God say.

6. Commit to a Path Forward

Once the season is over, it is time to act. Growth comes from making a choice and taking action with confidence.

- **Decide with conviction:** Trust the process you have completed. Even if the interpretation isn't perfect, moving forward is better than remaining in a state of perpetual indecision. Trust that God has worked through your Season of Spiritual Discernment. Make a decision. Commit it to God and move forward.
- **Pivot if necessary:** If, at the end of the season, you are more confused than when you started, you may want to start a new, shorter season with a different discernment team or a more refined question.