

# Discernment: Making Inspired Choices

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## ***“Just do it.”***

Sounds easy, right? On the one hand, there's something to be said for spontaneity. On the other hand, some of our choices in life require deep thought, prayer, and consideration, lest we find ourselves facing the consequences of a poor decision. That's where the art of *discernment* comes in.

Discernment is a time-honored practice in the Christian tradition. In essence, discernment is a decision-making process that honors the place of God's will in our lives. It is an interior search that seeks to align our own will with the will of God in order to learn what God is calling us to. Every choice we make, no matter how small, is an opportunity to align ourselves with God's will. Here are some tried-and-true pointers that can help you discern God's will.

### ***Talk to Someone You Respect.***

God often speaks to us through the wisdom of others. Seek out the wisdom of at least one and perhaps several people who you feel have the gift of wisdom and ask for their advice.

### ***Find Some Solitude.***

It's good to talk to other people when making important decisions, but at some point, it is crucial to make some time to be alone with your thoughts and with God. Invite God into your decision-making process.

### ***Start with What You Know.***

Lay out all of the facts in front of yourself so that you can deal with the known before you delve into the unknown!

### ***Tell God What It Is That You Desire and What You Fear.***

Be honest and tell God what your deepest desires and fears are in this situation is. Before you can say the words, “thy will be done,” be sure you are truly in touch with your own will; otherwise it will come back to bite you anyway!

### ***Let God Speak to You.***

Most of us don't actually hear a voice when God speaks to us. However, pay attention closely to the ways that God is speaking to you. What kinds of thoughts, feelings (especially

love, joy, and peace, or a lack thereof), and memories might God be stirring within you to help you make your decision? What Scripture story or saint's life comes to mind that might enlighten your decision? Find the passage or story and prayerfully read it.

***Know That God Has a Plan for You.***

Remind yourself that you are not on your own and that you don't have to yell and scream to get God's attention to help you in this matter. On the contrary, remind yourself that God has a plan for you and that his plan is driven purely by love.

***Pray to Do God's Will.***

As difficult as it may be, pray the words, “thy will be done,” asking God to give you the strength you need to continue to discern his will and to follow it.

***Wait.***

If circumstances allow, wait before making your decision. Continue to pay attention to your feelings to see which direction you are being drawn to.

***Prayerfully Commit.***

At some point, you need to act. Knowing that you have sought God's will, set forth to do the loving thing.

***Check Out the Fruits.***

Discernment is ongoing. After you make a decision, prayerfully evaluate it. If the fruits (outcomes) of your decision—your words, actions, and behaviors—are good, then it is a good indication that the decision you made is good. If the fruits are “rotten,” then that is a good indication that you may need to alter your course. True discernment results in good fruit (even if it's something we wouldn't normally pick out for ourselves).

Discernment can help you when you face decisions. Even though making good decisions can be difficult at times, trust that the Holy Spirit is with you to guide you and help you choose what is good and true.

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