

**SESSION  
FOUR**



# DISCERN



## — Introduction

In Acts 15, when making a big decision, the early church surrendered to one other *and* to God. The result was confidence in their next step; *'it seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit.'*

Discernment is all about relationship; with God and with one another. Knowing God intimately helps us recognize what His voice sounds like. Knowing one another helps build the trust and vulnerability needed for collective discernment.

*Answer with the first thing that comes to mind. You don't need to have it all 'figured out', simply share your reflections.*



1

### Opening Question:

- When you have a big decision to make, who do you naturally turn to first for perspective or guidance, and why?

5-6mins

## The Word: *Lectio Divina* 15 Mins

Read the following passage three times, following the Lectio Divina guide from the introduction.

*“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “this is the way; walk in it”*

*Isaiah 30:21*

- First read, followed by 30 sec silence - *What word or phrase caught you?*
- Second read followed by 30 sec silence - *Where does this touch your life right now?*
- Third read followed by 1 min silence - *What is the nudge? What is God inviting you toward?*
- Share briefly out loud what came to mind or heart during the reading.

## Conversation *25 Min*

Keep this dialogical, follow the flow in the room.

- When have you experienced the confidence that comes from making a decision together rather than alone?
- What are your thoughts about the idea that we can hear from God, today, in real time?
- What do you think about the discernment process that Ruth Haley Barton has written about? (Relinquishment, Indifference, Consolation/Desolation)
  - Why is it important to start with the prayer of relinquishment, and asking the Spirit to make you indifferent to anything that isn't of Him?
  - What might be the 'dangers' of doing this form of listening exercise?
- Have you ever had an experience of listening/discerning in a group, where it was clear the Spirit was speaking and leading? If so, would you be willing to share that with the group?

## Formation Practice 20 min

Discernment often begins with a simple but challenging act: loosening our grip on what we want so we can discover what God might want for us together.

1. **Split into smaller groups of 5-6 people. Ask a simple group prompt:** "Imagine you're taking a 6-hour road trip and can only choose one music playlist for the whole journey."
  - Quickly go around the room and have each person name their favourite genre, artist, or type of music (or podcast!)
2. **Introduce a twist:** "We are all on this trip together! There can only be one playlist. The goal is not to choose what any one person likes most. The goal is to find a playlist everyone could genuinely live with and enjoy together."
  - Take 3-5 minutes to discuss and reach a consensus.
3. **Debrief together:**
  - What did you have to give up or hold loosely? Did anyone feel unheard? What helped people feel included? What changed when the goal became "what serves the group?" rather than "what do I prefer?" What do you find most challenging about the concept of relinquishment in community?
4. **Pray together,** having a different person read each section aloud;

*We come before You with our own preferences, opinions, and expectations. We acknowledge that we do not see the whole picture, and we do not always know the best path forward.*

*Teach us to hold our desires with open hands. Give us the humility to listen well, the courage to yield when needed, and the trust to follow where You lead.*

*As we seek discernment together, help us care more about Your will than our own way, and more about the good of the community than our individual preferences.*

*Holy Spirit, make us attentive to Your voice and to one another, so that we may say with confidence, "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit."*

**All: Amen!**

5

## *The Examen 10 Min*

Close every session with the two questions below. Each person answers briefly. Then the host or another volunteer prays for each person by name. This can be done in smaller groups of 2-3 if it makes more sense.

- **Question 1:** Where did you feel most alive this week?
- **Question 2:** Where did you feel most drained, or most absent from God?



6

## *Carry into the Week*

This week: intentionally take on a posture of *relinquishment* in a conversation with a friend/family member/co-worker by simply listening without formulating a response or interrupting. Quiet your thoughts and just listen.

Notice the other person's response - body language, tone, etc. Notice where this feels difficult to you, and consider why that might be.

This is one way we can practice **stillness**.

## — *Closing thoughts*

The practices we've engaged on over the past four sessions are ordinary means by which we **become more like Jesus, together.**

Each session followed the same general outline, one that is fully **adaptable and available** for you to use moving forward - with your Be Group friends, in a different small gathering setting, or on your own. Substitute any passage of Scripture for Lectio Divina, develop conversation starters as you allow yourself to 'wonder aloud', create an intentional space for a group exercise, allowing time for both personal reflection and shared ideas, follow the steps of The Examen, develop your own micro-practices to take into everyday life.

*May you find yourself somewhere 'new' after these weeks- not at a conclusion, but at a beginning; a place where you are more open to the life the Spirit has been forming all along. May each simple rhythm continue to point us to Jesus and deepen our relationships with one another.*

*May we 'return to our people' to share in life's difficulties and celebrations, remembering we belong to one another, and to God.*

*May we be people who embody the virtues of **attentiveness** (alert and aware of God's Spirit at work in the world around us), **surrender** (a posture of openness to learn and grow), **compassion** (for others and ourselves), and **stillness** (so that we can truly hear one another, and the voice of God.)*

*As we are gathered, formed, sent, and as we listen for God's voice together, may we stay rooted in the presence of God and remain present with one another. May we become more and more aware of the restoring work of God, in our world and in our own hearts, and may we always be ready to join Him.*

