



DISCERNMENT in the church planting process

adapted from Pursuing God's Will Together by Ruth Haley Barton

Gathering	Personal Transformation	Devotional or Listening to Scripture or Time of Silence
	Group Values & Commitments	Re-affirm the church's mission, vision or values statements by going around the room having each person read one statement
	Defining the Question	What is it that is being asked? (Plan for this to take some time)
Preparing Hearts to Hear from God	Prayer of Indifference	Pray that God will set aside preconceived agendas and anything blocking us from God's leading. "God may I be indifferent to anything but your will."
	Test for Indifference	"What needs to die in me in for God's will to come forth in my life?"
	Prayer for Wisdom	Have one person pray for wisdom for the group
	Prayer for Trust	Have someone pray for trust and take time for people to pray for quiet trust that God's Spirit will lead
Gathering Information	Pertinent Facts & Information	What can we learn using human wisdom: history, financial reports, research and statics, etc.
	Voices from the Community	Seek the opinions of those affected by the decision, those with particular expertise or experience
	Direction & Calling	Does the decision line up with our values and goals?
	Scripture	Is God bringing to mind Scripture that has direct bearing on what we are discussing? Do the larger themes of Scripture provide a context for this decision?
	The Life of Christ	Does this decision reflect the mind of Christ as described in Phil. 2?
	Fruit of the Spirit	Would the choice nurture the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26) in the church community?
	Consolation & Desolation	Does a decision carry either a sense of life and peace or distress and confusion with it? What is the source of these feelings?

Discerning Collectively

Tradition	Has the church developed spiritual or missional authority in a certain area that would provide a foundation for the decision?
Love & Unity	Since our ability to love one another and to join in unity is Jesus' desire for us and glorifies him, which alternative fosters the greatest unity among us?
Listening in Silence	After all information has been gathered and discussed, provide time for the Spirit to speak into the decision
Selecting an option consistent with what God is doing	
Weighing the Options	Consider the options using the criteria above, especially consolation & desolation
Agree Together	A decision does not have to be unanimous but it should allow for unity to continue
Seek Inner Confirmation in Peace	Take the time to "walk around" with each side of the decision before committing to a final answer
Make a Formal Decision	Formally affirm decision and record in minutes Take more time to discern Appoint a subgroup for more work Name areas of agreement Identify issues to deal with later Vote by majority vote Drop the matter

RESOURCES

BOOKS

- ▶ Barton, Ruth Haley. *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- ▶ Palmer, Parker. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

ONLINE

- ▶ [Biblical and Theological Perspective on Spiritual Transformation: An Interactive Process for Groups \(PDF\)](#)
by The Transforming Center
- ▶ [Movements in Corporate Leadership Discernment Chart \(PDF\)](#)
by The Transforming Center
- ▶ [The Clearness Committee: A Communal Approach to Discernment \(PDF\)](#)
by Parker Palmer
- ▶ [Indifference: The Key to Christian Leadership \(Blog Post\)](#) by Peter Scazzero
- ▶ [The Pursuit of God: The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing \(YouTube Video\)](#) by A.W. Tozer
- ▶ [The Meaning of Detachment \(Blog Post\)](#) by Ignition Spirituality