

A Simple Rule for Discernment

Five steps for listening honestly for God's direction — for decisions large and small.

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Discernment is not about unlocking a hidden answer God is withholding. It is a lifestyle of listening for God's voice in everything we do, everywhere we go (Proverbs 3:5–6). The steps below are not a formula that guarantees certainty — they are a rule, a rhythm you can return to, whenever you're holding a real decision before God.

STEP 1

Name the Real Decision

Clarify what is actually being decided. Is there a genuine choice to make, and do you have agency to decide? Keep the question concrete and practical — discernment works best when the question is small enough to answer and honest enough to matter.

STEP 2

Seek Interior Freedom

Before seeking clarity, seek freedom. Where do you feel pulled, pressured, afraid, or attached? What fears, expectations, or “shoulds” may already be steering you? A simple prayer: “God, free me to desire what leads toward love, truth, and faithfulness.”

STEP 3

Gather Wisdom, Not Omniscience

Discernment doesn't require perfect information, only sufficient information. Learn what you reasonably can, consider how this decision affects others, and seek counsel from at least one trusted, wise voice. The goal is perspective, not certainty.

STEP 4

Notice the Movements Within You

As you hold the options before God, pay attention: which option brings greater clarity, peace, or alignment? Which stirs resistance, anxiety, or contraction? These are signals, not verdicts — don't over-interpret them. Ask: what seems to lead me toward love, humility, and service?

STEP 5

Choose Faithfully, Not Perfectly

At some point, discernment becomes a decision. Choose the option that appears good enough and oriented toward faithfulness. Trust that God's guidance continues after the decision, not only before it. Say yes with humility, not certainty.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICH

Embrace “Good Enough” Theology

Many of us were quietly formed to believe discernment works like this: *if I pray hard enough, listen closely enough, and discern correctly enough, I will unlock God's will.* This belief is spiritually exhausting, and theologically thin. God's will is not fragile. Discernment is about direction, not precision. Faithfulness matters more than accuracy. And God's grace exceeds our discernment skills.

A CLOSING PRACTICE

Palms Down, Palms Up

A simple, embodied prayer you can return to whenever you face a decision or need to find your footing.

Palms Down — Releasing — Rest your hands on your legs, palms facing down. Name silently what you are carrying that is not yours to carry right now — anxiety, pressure, expectations, fears, noise. Rest in that release for a moment.

Palms Up — Receiving — Turn your palms upward, open and receptive. Name silently what you are asking to receive — clarity, courage, peace, permission, presence. Rest in that openness.

Stillness — Simply Being — Rest in the posture, palms up, quiet, without an agenda. This is the posture of discernment itself.

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart... Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go.” — Proverbs 3:5, MSG

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