

# HOW DO WE DISCOVER GOD'S WILL?

**Discernment** is using the gift of our God-given intuition in prayer to discover God's will personally or in groups. St Ignatius taught people to detect the sources of one's thoughts, emotions and actions. In other words, the person or group who is/are making the discernment recognises the option which moves them towards God rather than the one that takes them away from God. Many people would have discovered (like Ignatius) through prayerful wisdom born of suffering and common sense to do this already. But sometimes we need a refresher!

Here are some pointers drawn from Ignatius' method to help us revive or begin again!

## The Process of Discernment

1. I begin with prayer by coming into **God's presence**, and with an open and trusting attitude ask God for help and guidance.
2. I notice **God's word in Scripture** and how it is touching me. It could be a particular word or phrase and I notice how it connects with me and my particular situation. My **feelings** are important. How would I describe them? (See over the page for some helpful prompts if needed.)
3. I **reflect** on the word/s and notice other connections- reading, other kinds of communication e.g. through wisdom of friends, family.
4. I notice **possible choices and actions emerging**- which one leads me closer to God's life and living the fruits of the Spirit e.g. love, joy, kindness, patience, mercy, compassion and self-control. Here I can spend time in a conversation with God. How do I listen to God?
5. I may need more time to consider No. 4 as there may be dilemmas popping up for me as I notice the attractions of non-life giving possibilities and even the possibilities of two or more positive choices. Any decision needs **testing**. We are guided therefore to common sense to find God's will, which will bring peace and conviction as we discern amid relationships and commitments within personal or communal prayer.

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Furthermore, **Groups** discern in a similar way. In groups listening to one another and discerning, it is not a time to debate or argue. It is a time for honesty and openness as new life is the option the group is seeking, rather than a model of facing vested interests, dealing with blind spots and individual long-held attitudes which can inhibit group progress.

To assist in developing this inner awareness both personally and communally, the daily **awareness examen** (encouraged by St Ignatius and practised today across the world) guides us in the presence of God each day to reflect on the life-giving and alternative non-life giving ways we have lived our day, to be grateful for blessings we have received and to learn to be open to the length and breadth and depth of God's creation daily in communities.

Discernment is about making truth and love visible. It flows from prayer into action and review of action into prayer as we continue to become more prayerful-active people in a distracting technological, highly stimulating world.

## Feeling Words

### Open

understanding  
confident  
amazed  
sympathetic  
accepting  
kind

### Good

calm  
peaceful,  
pleased  
encouraged  
relaxed,  
blessed,  
reassured,  
surprised

### Positive

eager  
keen  
inspired  
determined  
excited  
bold  
brave  
daring

### Happy

fortunate  
delighted  
grateful  
satisfied  
glad  
cheerful  
hopeful  
excited  
content

### Love

considerate  
sensitive  
passionate  
warm  
comforted  
encouraging  
compassionate

### Alive

courageous  
energetic  
optimistic  
free  
interested  
concerned  
fascinated  
engrossed  
curious

### Strong

sure  
certain  
rebellious  
secure  
free

### Angry

irritated  
annoyed  
upset  
resentful  
cross  
indignant

### Helpless

alone  
hesitant  
useless  
powerless

### Hurt

rejected  
dejected  
depressed  
disappointed  
discouraged  
miserable

### Indifferent

neutral  
weary  
bored  
cold

### Sad

grieving  
desolate  
lonely  
unhappy

### Afraid

fearful  
anxious  
alarmed  
nervous  
doubtful

### Shy

lost  
unsure  
uneasy  
tense  
pessimistic

### Confused

upset  
doubtful  
embarrassed