

Brief Guide to Discernment

1. God does God want? – **Principle and Foundation**
 - a. God created us to love, praise, and serve God in this life and the next
 - b. All things are created to that end
 - c. We should only use the things that help us achieve our end and We let go of the things that don't
2. God is love. And He can speak to us in many ways. "Love and do what you will."
 - a. Can God speak through my desires? – yes!
 - b. "God is more intimate to me than I am to myself." St. Augustine
 - i. God can speak to me through my deepest desires.
3. **Discernment** is about deciding what actions should we take?
 - a. All your actions should aim at achieving your ultimate calling, the principle and foundation.
 - b. It is important to remember that discernment presupposes that you are choosing between two or more goods; it is **not** a choice between good and evil.
4. How should I sort through my desires, wants and passions? How do I know which feelings to follow?
 - a. I sort them out depending on how they help me achieve my ultimate goal – the Principle and Foundation
 - b. We examine the feeling and stirrings those choices bring us: **Consolation vs Desolations.**
 - i. Consolation is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives "courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations, and peace. This he does by making all easy, by removing all obstacles so that the soul goes forward in doing good." St. Ignatius You are doing God's will, obeying your legitimate superiors, and finding fruit in my studies or labors. If I am growing in "faith, hope and love, and experience interior joy or peace even in difficult times.
 - ii. Desolation: is caused by the evil spirit who is apt to "harass with anxiety, to afflict with sadness, to raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul. Thus, he seeks to prevent the soul from advancing". You know I am in desolation if you experience "darkness of soul, turmoil of spirit, an inclination to what is sinful and earthly, restlessness, temptations, decrease in faith, hope, love... and your soul feels slothful, tepid, sad, and separated, as were, from its Creator." St. Ignatius
5. **Examen of Conscience**
 - a. Should be practiced daily or twice a day. It takes between 10-15 minutes when done properly.
6. Our attitude towards our choices should be one of **Indifference** or **Detachment**
 - a. Our goal is more freedom for more God. So, we hold all things equally at first, no preference for either choice available to us.
7. We mediate on a **Colloquy** with God before to remind us of our ultimate goal and how are actions would impact it.
 - a. What have I done for Christ?
 - b. What am I doing for Christ?
 - c. What will I do for Christ?
8. After the Colloquy we mediate on our options and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. These are different ways to wight your options:
 - a. Write down the Pros and Cons of each choice
 - b. Write a letter to a friend who is trying to make a choice like yours, what would you advice him
 - c. Imagine you are standing in front of God at the end of your life, what would like your choice to have been?
9. Pray about the decision you are leaning toward and examine your consolation or desolations received for it.
10. Share your reflections with a **spiritual director** or guide. Don't make a final decision without seeking guidance first.
11. Make your decision. It is important not to change your mind after unless you receive a very concrete sign from God. This decision was a product of guidance from the Holy Spirit already.