

ARROWS

WHEN YOU CATCH A TINY GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE, BE SURE NOT TO SMOTHER IT WITH YOUR OWN AGENDA. LET IT BREATHE. LET IT GROW AT A HEALTHY PACE. ADMIT IT'S BOTH DELIGHTFUL AND TERRIFYING. AS YOU TAKE YOUR NEXT RIGHT STEP TODAY, TRUST THAT GOD WON'T LET YOU MISS YOUR OWN FUTURE. FOLLOW THE ARROWS.

- EMILY P. FREEMAN -

A DECISION MAKING AND DISCERNMENT COMPANION

Dis·cern·ment /də'sərnəm(ə)nt/

1. the ability to judge well.
2. (in Christian contexts) perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding.

We all have to make decisions in life. Some of these life decisions will be larger and more significant, weighing heavily on us. Others will be seemingly less important. Sometimes we have all the time that we need to consider our next steps. Other times we will feel the pressure of an impending deadline and a rushed decision.

This guide is a resource in making those life decisions. Some of the invitations and prompts you find may not fit your circumstances exactly. If that is the case, draw from it what you can use, or feel the freedom to disregard it altogether.

BEFORE BEGINNING

Here are a few key principles to draw your attention to. These will be expounded upon later in the guide:

- It is of utmost importance that if you are seeking to discern the Lord's will in your life for something big that you are also seeking His will daily in the small things through communion with Him reading Scripture and praying. If you have not been in a season of regular rhythms and discipline of communing with God, we would absolutely recommend that you get that in order for a season before attempting to trust a voice and leading that you have not been interacting with regularly. 30 days of consistent daily time with the Lord would be a good place to start.
- Don't make major life decisions in seasons of desolation (sensing an absence of God in your life), chaos or upheaval.
- Don't make major life decisions in a vacuum; invite others into the process. Perhaps consider arranging some phone calls or meetings with people who you respect and trust and ask them to honestly speak into your decision process. People often have opinions that they don't share until they are directly asked. If you have already made a decision and then inform people of it, rarely will people tell you their concerns. It is best to find out what concerns are before making a decision.
- It might be most helpful to set aside a certain time each week to consider your decision. Scheduling a certain amount of time that you can predict will allow you to have boundaries around the exhausting and stressful parts that often accompany decision making. If you are married, this will help avoid having conversations when one person feels like it and the other one doesn't. Having a set length of time will also prevent feelings of overwhelm that may come with spending all day thinking about it, rather than doable 2 hour portions of time.

A LITURGY FOR BIG DECISIONS

By Kallie Terrana

We come before you, Lord, standing at the edge of a big decision.

It feels daunting, not knowing where we will land.

There are so many ways the road could part; we can feel the paralysis of making a wrong choice.

We pause to ask for clarity and direction.

We lay down our hurry, and our desire to just know the outcomes.

It can be hard to trust your timing, or to trust ourselves.

Help us slow down so we can hear the Voice of Love.

Remind us that the goal isn't always the decision itself, but instead is an opportunity to know You more deeply.

May we grow in intimacy with You through the process of decision making.

Jesus, remind us of Your words from the gospels: if God provides for the flowers and the birds, we can trust that we will be provided for as well.

Comfort us in times when we have no control over a decision, or the answer is no. Bring us peace that passes understanding when we simply do not understand.

Holy Spirit, remind us that sanctification often comes through these unclear or challenging seasons. While it may be stretching or frustrating, grant us the vision to see the metamorphosis happening in our lives.

Father, when we are anxious to move things forward, remind us that You are present to us in this very moment. May we know that Your heart is for us, and Your plan is good.

Your word tells us that You will light our path and guide our feet. May we be "joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer." In the midst of transition, keep our eyes focused on You and let us not be distracted by anxieties and unknowns.

Lead us into deeper intimacy and trust, no matter where the road may go.

Help us recognize the significance of the journey, and the ways we can grow with You as we walk whatever path You have already paved.

May we see Your glory and power in our lives as we walk with You step by step.

May we lay down our expectations and our own "perfect plans," trusting that You have good in store for us.

May we believe that the best is yet to come.

IGNATIAN STEPS TO DISCERNMENT

The Ignatian steps of discernment are a framework for making decisions rooted in the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). These steps are designed to help individuals make decisions that align with their values and faith. Ignatius offers great insight into the process of decision making, or discernment. The reality is, we have to make decisions all the time, both big and small, and this process of decision making will never end. How do we do it? Do we choose the option that makes us happiest? The option that will give us the most money, power, fame?

These steps are designed to help individuals make decisions that are not only rational but also spiritually grounded. They encourage a deep sense of reflection and prayer throughout the decision-making process. It's important to note that the discernment process may take time, and not all decisions will have a clear-cut answer. The goal is to make choices that lead to greater alignment with one's faith and values.

1. PRAY FOR GUIDANCE

Begin by placing yourself in the presence of God through prayer. Seek God's guidance and ask for the grace to discern well.

2. IDENTIFY THE DECISION TO BE MADE OR THE ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED.

Clearly define the decision you need to make. This step involves understanding the context and the choices you're facing. The decision should be one that is practical and real, and you should be able to gather information that you need in order to be able to make the decision.

3. CONSIDER THE OPTIONS.

List all the possible options or choices available to you. Take time to explore each option fully. It may be helpful to state the individual options as a positive, concrete choice that is as specific as possible. (Ex.: I will take enough classes so that I can graduate in May and then prepare to move overseas. I will either move with a Salt plant or I will move overseas.

4. PRAY

Pray especially for openness to God's will. Ask for an inner freedom that allows you to not desire one choice more than another. This will require the courage to be able to ask God: Which choice will give most glory to God and be expressive of my most authentic self?

Talk with God about the particular areas where you need freedom. Bring them to God in prayer. Ask above all for a deep love for God and for the people being affected by the decision. Pray that no self-centered attraction or aversion about a choice will sidetrack you from what the Holy Spirit is pointing you to. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all this.

5. GATHER ALL THE NECESSARY INFORMATION.

Find out all the relevant specifics relating to the decision: Who? What? Where? When? How much? Why? Be informed.

6. CONSULT WITH OTHERS:

Seek the input of trusted friends, mentors, or spiritual advisors. Talking to someone who is sensitive to Christian spiritual values who will be honest and objective with you is important. Discuss the matter in detail—its values and possibilities as well as your strengths and weaknesses. Share your thoughts and feelings about the decision and listen to their perspectives. In particular, discuss what obstacles could be limiting your freedom by blocking you or inclining you to one choice over the other.

Possible obstacles: inferiority complexes, superiority complexes, glorified self-images, "shoulds" that pressure you, perfectionism, fears, greed, possessiveness, past hurts, self-pity, competitiveness, envy, impatience with yourself or others, lust, ingratitude, desire for control, power, status, prestige, exclusiveness, etc.

Also be sure to consult with everyone who will be intimately affected by the decision being made. Get their input about it, including their feelings and desires.

7. REPEAT THE FOURTH STEP AND PRAY FOR OPENNESS TO GOD'S WILL.

Pray about the matter again in light of the data you have gathered and the counsel of others. Most likely new feelings and desires have been stirred up that need to be shared with God.

8. WEIGH THE PROS AND CONS.

Begin with a short prayer asking God to be with you as you make your lists. Ask to be able to see clearly what God chooses for you and what will best honor and serve God and others. For each option, carefully evaluate the advantages (pros) and disadvantages (cons). Make sure that you state all the reasons for and all the reasons against each of the choices and be sure to list all the reasons you can think of. You will evaluate them in the next step.

9. DO A FORMAL EVALUATION OF ALL THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES.

The point of this evaluation is to see which advantages and disadvantages seem to be coming from the influence of the Holy Spirit and which ones do not. Try to examine your motives and values. To do this well, you may have to spend considerable time on this step. It may take weeks if you are making a major life decision.

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages by asking four questions:

- Which reasons are the most important? Why?
- How do each of my options preserve my values?
- Which option more evidently leads to God's service and better allows the Holy Spirit to grow you?
- Which option seems more consistent with your own faith journey and history with God?

10. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FEELINGS.

When you reflect on how each option makes you feel, you may find that God often communicates through our deepest desires. Ask God to give you feelings of consolation about the preferred option. These are feelings of joy, enthusiasm, deeper faith, greater hope and trust, greater love, confidence, and courage.

These feelings of consolation accompany your desires when they are clearly pointed toward loving and serving God, others, and your true self. They are very different from the feelings that accompany your desires when they are influenced by disordered attachments aimed only at your selfish ways.

11. MAKE A DECISION

After careful discernment, make a decision. Choose the option that seems most aligned with your values, inner sense of peace, and God's will as you understand it. Trust in God and make your decision, even if you are not certain about it. Once you've made your decision, take concrete steps to put it into action. Trust that you've made the best choice you can with the information and guidance you have.

12. REVIEW AND REFLECT.

Live with the decision for a while to see whether your thoughts, desires, and feelings continue to support it. Review your decision to see how it's working out. Reflect on whether it's leading you closer to your values and goals. If necessary, be open to adjusting your course.

13. TRUST IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

Finally, trust that God's providence is at work in your life. Even if things don't go as planned, believe that God can bring good out of any situation.

DETACHMENT

*It is helpful to become aware of things that are keeping you away from God.
Detaching from these things will help to set a good foundation before entering
into the decision making process. Some examples are:*

NAME AND CONFESS ATTACHMENTS THAT TAKE PRIORITY OVER GOD

NAME AND CONFESS THE WAYS THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO MAINTAIN A CERTAIN IMAGE

NAME AND CONFESS THE BELIEF THAT YOUR MONEY AND POSSESSIONS BELONG TO YOU

NAME AND CONFESS WAYS IN WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN TRUSTING IN YOUR OWN ABILITIES AND NOT IN GOD

NAME AND CONFESS THE WAYS THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO MANIPULATE OTHERS.

PRAYER OF INDIFFERENCE

How do we pray in the midst of decision making? We deliberately pray that God "Keep my wishings from turning into willings, my willings from becoming fault-finding with thy providences" (Valley of Vision, p297).

This shows us that we have permission to have desires. Jesus prayed in the garden that He might not have to drink from the cup in front of Him. We can have preferences, wishes and desires. But we need to be mindful that our desires and wishings do not turn into willings. Willings are when we start to emphasize our will over God's. When we do that, we are at risk of becoming fault-finding or critical of how God is working specifically in our lives.

So as we pray, let us be honest with God about our desires, yet hold them with open hands and following the way of Christ, say "Thy will be done." This will create tension as you sit in your desires and pray boldly for them while also simultaneously praying "Thy will be done".

When people hear the word "indifference," they typically think of it as a negative thing. Apathetic, maybe, or not caring. But in the spiritual life, it is actually very different than that, and very positive. Here, it means, "I am indifferent to anything but God's will."

Ignatius of Loyola taught that our openness to any outcome or answer from God correlates with our willingness and ability to really hear what God has to say. If we are overly attached to one outcome over another, we won't hear God clearly. Ignatius believed that this spiritual indifference would lead to spiritual freedom. When we talk about praying a prayer of indifference, we mean a prayer where we are abandoning ourselves to God and his will. We want nothing other than this in our lives. We surrender our own preferences, our own desires, our image, our comfort, and whatever else might be keeping us from choosing God's will in our lives.

If we look in the Bible at examples of indifference, a striking one is Mary's response to what would take place in her life. She was willing to completely lay aside her own image, desires, and life in order to participate in God's will. Her response to the angel, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word," shows true indifference. Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will but yours be done," is another example. Jesus asked if possible for the cup to be taken from him; it was not his preference, yet he was willing to participate in God's plan.

PRAYER OF INDIFFERENCE

What does a prayer of indifference look like for us today? Here is one way you can practice cultivating this posture.

There are 2 different aspects to the prayer of indifference. First there is the prayer FOR indifference, when we pray for the indifference that we do not yet have, asking for God to grace our lives with it. Then there is the prayer OF indifference, which we are able to pray fully and honestly that we are indifferent to anything but the will of God.

Charles de Foucauld, soldier and Catholic priest, wrote this Prayer of Abandonment that we can use as a model to spur us on toward a prayer life of indifference. Consider borrowing this prayer and praying it for yourself.

Father,

I abandon myself into your hands;

do with me what you will.

Whatever you may do, I thank you;

I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me,

and in all your creatures—

I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul:

I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,

for I love you, Lord, and so need

to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands

without reserve and with boundless confidence,

for you are my Father. Amen.

SURRENDER NOVENA

The Surrender Novena you see below is adapted from the original Catholic version.

The original Surrender Novena comes from Father Dolindo Ruotolo (1882-1970), and is based on words that he sensed to have come to him from God. Fr. Dolindo suffered for much of his life, even living in paralysis for the last ten years before his death. A novena is a 9-day series of intentional prayer. Novenas are a beautiful way to grow purposeful, consistent, and persistent in daily prayer. Turn to the Surrender Novena whenever you struggle to take care of something on your own, whenever you struggle to give over a worry, doubt, or suffering to God.

To pray the Surrender Novena, you can either pray one portion per day for 9 days in a row, or you can spend a long time in prayer one day going through each portion. As you read each portion slowly, reflect on the words as if they are God speaking to you, and consider how he might be inviting you to trust in Him as you surrender. Of course these words do not take the place of Scripture, but they can be read as an encouragement and challenge to us when we are struggling to surrender. It might be helpful to write down some reflections and personal responses after praying each portion.

After each portion, repeat the surrender refrain, "O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!" It may be helpful to consider the refrain as a breath prayer, a short, simple prayer you can pray as you inhale and exhale several times. The repetition is not meant to be rote or redundant, but rather a truth that when spoken over and over, can take root in your heart and mind as it gradually forms your thoughts and beliefs. You might find that as you say the refrain each time, something else specific comes to mind about your current situation that you can release to God. Release it and pray the refrain again. Some days you may be able to say the words wholeheartedly, while others they may be a prayer of desperation.

DAY 1

Why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 2

Surrender to me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to me a worried prayer asking me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. It is against this surrender, deeply against it, to worry, to be nervous and to desire to think about the consequences of anything. It is like the confusion that children feel when they ask their mother to see their needs, and then try to take care of those needs for themselves so that their childlike efforts get in their mother's way. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying, "You take care of it.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 3

How many things I do when the soul, in so much spiritual and material need, turns to me, looks at me and says to me, "You take care of it," then closes its eyes and rests. In pain you pray for me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to me, instead, you want me to adapt your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor how to. So do not act this way, but pray as I taught you in the Our Father: "Hallowed be thy Name," that is, be glorified in my need. "Thy kingdom come," that is, let all that is in us and in the world be in accord with your kingdom. "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven," that is, in our need, decide as you see fit for our temporal and eternal life. If you say to me truly: "Thy will be done," which is the same as saying: "You take care of it," I will intervene with all my omnipotence, and I will resolve the most difficult situations.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 4

You see evil growing instead of weakening? Do not worry. Close your eyes and say to me with faith: "Thy will be done, You take care of it." I say to you that I will take care of it, and that I will intervene as does a doctor and I will accomplish miracles when they are needed. Do you see that the sick person is getting worse? Do not be upset, but close your eyes and say, "You take care of it." I say to you that I will take care of it, and that there is no medicine more powerful than my loving intervention. By my love, I promise this to you.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 5

And then I must lead you on a path different from the one you see, I will prepare you; I will carry you in my arms; I will let you find yourself, like children who have fallen asleep in their mother's arms, on the other bank of the river. What troubles you and hurts you immensely are your reason, your thoughts and worry, and your desire at all costs to deal with what afflicts you.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 6

You are sleepless; you want to judge everything, direct everything and see to everything and you surrender to human strength, or worse – to men themselves, trusting in their intervention – this is what hinders my words and my views. Oh, how much I wish from you this surrender, to help you; and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! Satan tries to do exactly this: to agitate you and to remove you from my protection and to throw you into the jaws of human initiative. So, trust only in me, rest in me, surrender to me in everything.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 7

I perform miracles in proportion to your full surrender to me and to your not thinking of yourselves. I sow treasure troves of graces when you are in deepest poverty. No person of reason, no thinker, has ever performed miracles, not even among the saints. He does divine works whosoever surrenders to God. So don't think about it any more, because your mind is acute and for you it is very hard to see evil and to trust in me and to not think of yourself. Do this for all your needs, do this, all of you, and you will see great continual silent miracles. I will take care of things, I promise this to you.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 8

Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of my grace; close your eyes and do not think of the present, turning your thoughts away from the future just as you would from temptation. Repose in me, believing in my goodness, and I promise you by my love that if you say, "You take care of it," I will take care of it all; I will console you, liberate you and guide you.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DAY 9

Pray always in readiness to surrender, and you will receive from it great peace and great rewards, even when I confer on you the grace of immolation, of repentance, and of love. Then what does suffering matter? It seems impossible to you? Close your eyes and say with all your soul, "Jesus, you take care of it." Do not be afraid, I will take care of things and you will bless my name by humbling yourself. A thousand prayers cannot equal one single act of surrender, remember this well. There is no novena more effective than this.

"O Jesus, I surrender myself to You, take care of everything!"

DISCERNMENT USING CONSOLATION AND DESOLATION

Ignatius of Loyola offers great insight into the process of decision making, or discernment. The reality is, we have to make decisions all the time, both big and small, and this process of decision making will never end. How do we do it? Do we choose the option that makes us happiest? The option that will give us the most money, power, fame? Ignatius encourages us to pay attention to our interior movements (that is, what is happening to us internally). He describes these movements as consolation and desolation.

The idea is that we examine the interior movements of our hearts closely and consider whether we are making steps toward or away from God. The movement toward God is consolation and the movement away from God is desolation. Keep in mind this is much more than just feelings of happiness and peace versus despair and sadness.

Consolation is when something causes your soul to become more in love with Jesus. When you are experiencing consolation, you can relate to and hear God clearly. You feel intimately close with him, and you desire to share that with others.

Desolation is when something causes our soul to feel separated from Jesus. One reason this feeling might occur is because we are living in sin. Sometimes, though, God allows us to go through seasons of darkness so he can show us something that we wouldn't be able to see in the light. Desolation can still be God's gift to us; God may want to draw us deeper to himself when prayer is hard for us and when we don't sense his presence. In desolation, you might experience resistance to your faith because you are more sensitive to hearing the lies and accusations of the Enemy.

In seasons of desolation, it is important to make no major life decisions. Try to praise God even when it is hard. Try incorporating the Prayer of Examen into your daily routine to help you determine if there are any causes of your desolation that you could change.

In discernment and decision making, paying attention to these interior movements allows us to pay attention to our emotions in a safe, reliable way, as we are focusing not simply on how we feel, but on if we are moving toward or away from God. Day by day, through paying attention to these movements in the small areas of our lives, we are able to discern what to do. Clearly we want to do the things that will move us closer to God.

In order to do this exercise, we need to take a temperature check of what is happening inside of us. We can do this by paying attention to our consolations and desolations.

- Make two lists on a piece of paper, one called "consolation" and one called "desolation".
- Reflect on your day, week, or even year to see what things should go on each list. Which things or activities or people deepened your relationship with God (consolation)? Which things destroyed your relationship with God (desolation)?
- After making your lists, ask God what he wants you to see. What does he want you to know? What is he inviting you to pursue? What is he inviting you to release?

CONSOLATION

DESOLATION

WAITING AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

This developed out of a casual text comment from a dear friend and mentor, Tonni McCollister. She texted that "waiting is active". I asked her to email more thoughts on that. The ideas below come out of that email. If you find yourself in a season of waiting, consider reviewing these daily, or focusing on a few each day. Meditating on these will form your thoughts and prayers as you wait.

Waiting on God is a spiritual discipline that requires active dependence on Him.

1. We continue to acknowledge His goodness while we wait. We have to trust that He is working on our behalf, even if we cannot see it. This is a conscious and sometimes daily exercise. "Lord you are good because..."
2. We continue to acknowledge His sovereign knowledge and control as we trust Him. This is especially important if we are having trouble thinking He is not acting in a timely way, or if the outcome is not as we think it should be. "You are God, I am not..."
3. We decide that we are not really in control, and our dependence is for Him to work on our behalf. For some of us, this is a lifetime of work.
4. We ask and we cry out. We ask for the thing that we are waiting for.
5. We cast anxiety on Him and we restrain fear and worried thoughts. It is important to name those specifically.
6. We wait with anticipation and expectation for His word to lead us. We are active in looking to receive something from Him as we search the Scriptures.
7. We seek out counsel and a word from others who we trust, for wisdom comes in the counsel of many.
8. We obey if we receive a word, even if it is something random or silly sounding, like "Take your mom some flowers today".
9. We pray.
10. We fast.
11. We serve, even those who we are waiting to be reconciled with.
12. We seek Him. We are looking for Him in every word and circumstance in life and in nature and in all things.
13. We choose courage because He is with us and He is for us and we believe what He says.
14. We wait to feel peace in the midst of us feeling harried or discouraged about a person or a situation. We choose to "Cast my anchor in the port of peace, knowing that my present and future are in nail-pierced hands" (Valley of Vision Puritan Prayer book, p296).
15. We deliberately pray that God "Keep my wishings from turning into willings, my willings from becoming fault-finding with thy providences" (Valley of Vision, p297).
16. We are willing to sit in the tension of our desires and praying boldly for them while also simultaneously praying "Thy will be done". This may be the hardest of them all.

A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK OTHERS

Ask at least three different people these questions. Write down anything notable.

NAME:

NAME:

NAME:

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU FEEL I MAY NOT BE SEEING CLEARLY IN THIS SITUATION?

IS THERE ANYTHING DIFFICULT THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO ME BUT ARE AFRAID OF HOW I MAY RECEIVE IT?

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN MAKING A DIFFICULT DECISION IN LIFE?

A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Sometimes you are in a situation where you make your decision for yourself, while at others, you are in a situation with a collective group of people, such as a team, or alongside your spouse. The questions below use the term "we," but if "I" is a more appropriate to use, change it as needed.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE DID NOT DO THIS?

A common trap is to think that a decision involves choosing which of two options to pursue. There is always a third option: doing nothing. Doing may not be a good option. If you are paddling a canoe toward a rock, choosing to go left or right around the rock will be a wiser choice. But sometimes doing nothing can be wise, especially as it may give the team more time to become better informed and make a better decision later.

WHAT COULD MAKE US REGRET THIS DECISION?

Asking yourself what could make you regret a decision is a powerful way to identify potential problems or risks with the decisions. This offers a last chance to surface anything you may be worried about.

IT'S A YEAR FROM NOW AND WE'RE LOOKING BACK AT THIS DECISION...

The full question I like to ask is: "It's a year from now and we're looking back at this decision. What's happened that would make us regret the decision we're about to make?"

Envisioning our future selves looking back on a decision is a good way to anticipate possible problems. Once they're identified, you can discuss whether the decision is still correct considering these potential problems.

A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

HOW WILL WE LATER KNOW THIS WAS THE RIGHT DECISION?

Asking how we'll later know we made the right decision is great because it forces you to be clear about your goals in choosing among alternatives.

ARE THERE CHOICES WE ARE MAKING HERE THAT COULD TRAP US INTO DOING OR BEING SOMETHING THAT WE DON'T WANT?

WHAT WOULD BE THE COST OF BEING WRONG?

DOES THIS DECISION REALLY NEED TO BE MADE NOW? WOULD IT BE BENEFICIAL AND POSSIBLE TO DEFER MAKING A DECISION?

A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

IS THIS DECISION REVERSIBLE? WHAT WOULD TRIGGER US TO REVERSE OR AT LEAST CONSIDER REVERSING THE DECISION?

IF I FAST FORWARD 10 YEARS, WILL I HAVE ANY REGRETS ABOUT EITHER DECISION?

DOES ANYONE NOT FULLY SUPPORT THIS DECISION?

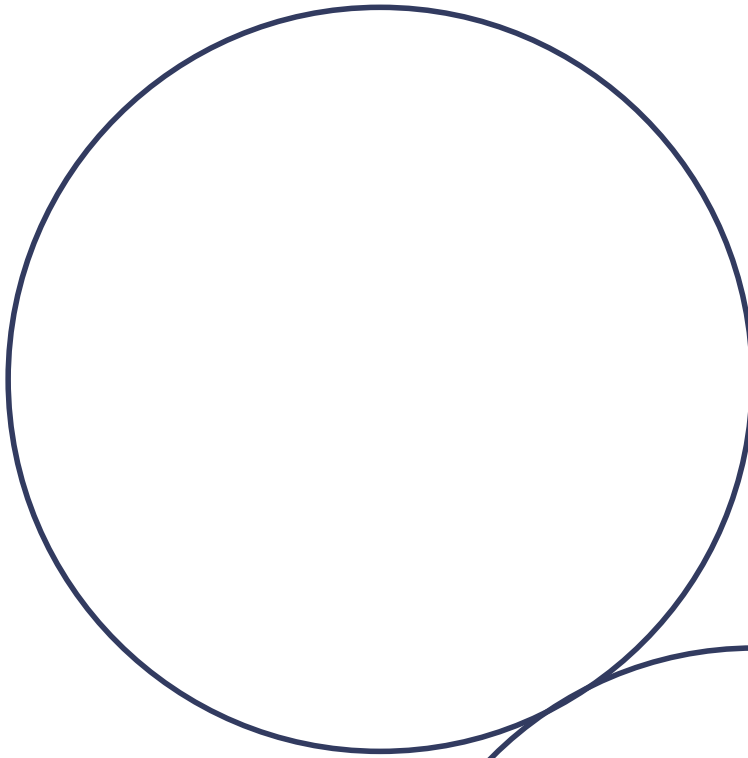
DO WE HAVE THE RIGHT INFORMATION WE NEED TO MAKE OUR DECISION? IF NOT, HOW CAN WE GET THE INFORMATION THAT WE NEED?

HOW YOU FIT INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Consider the following questions as you write down what you value in each of the circles. What has the most significant pull on your values?

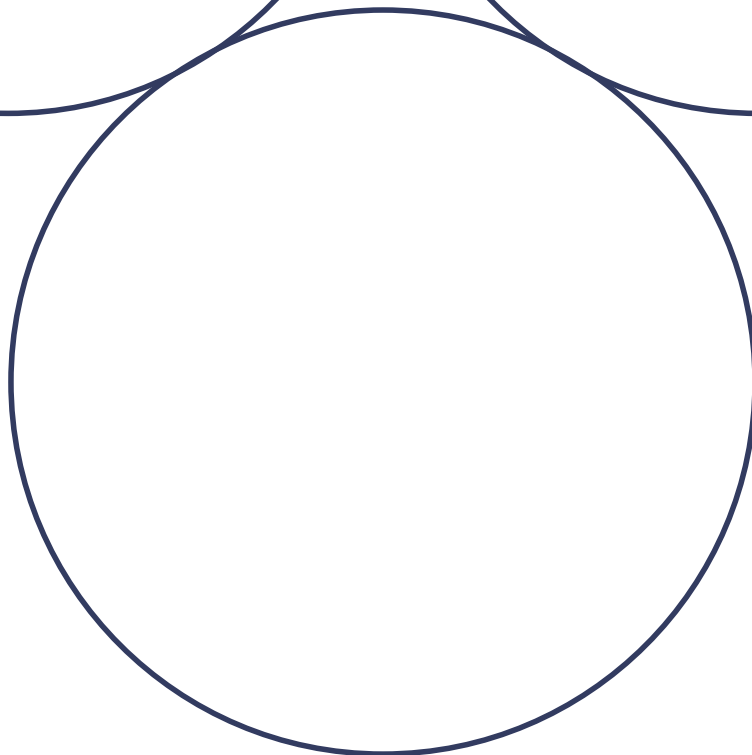
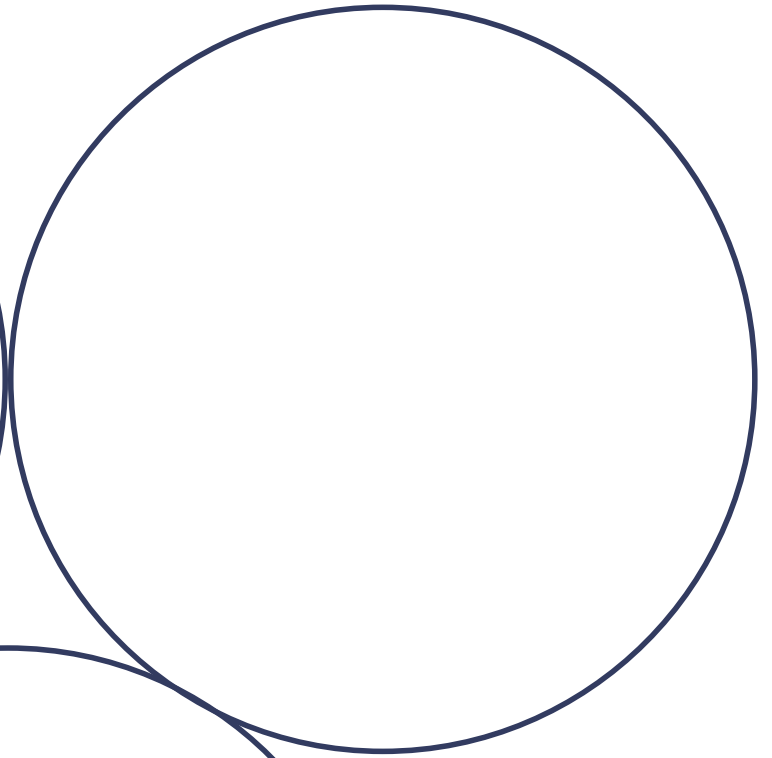
PERSONAL

What is personally fulfilling as you serve the kingdom?



FAMILY

What is important as you consider your family as you serve the kingdom?



COMMUNITY

What is important as you consider your community as you serve the kingdom?

HOW YOU FIT INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

After you fill in these circles, see what direction they may be leading you.

WHERE IS THERE OVERLAP?

WHERE IS THERE CONFLICT?

WHAT THEMES DO YOU NOTICE?

DREAMING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Consider that when you sense God is leading you away from something, that He will also lead you to the next thing. Sometimes we sense that the time we have spent in a place or doing something is coming to an end. This may be true, but sometimes seasons come to an end in a very slow and intentional way. It is as if it were a very long exit ramp, giving you the time you need to discern what is next. In some cases, you may know that it is time to leave, but you wait to do the actual leaving until God has given you clarity about what may be next.

WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE?

A dream is a God-given idea, plan, or goal that leads to God-honoring results. Take into consideration the key life areas, although you do not need to have a dream for each one. Take into consideration your gifts, strengths and talents, although, again, you do not need to have a dream for each one.

WHEN YOU ENVISION WHAT COULD BE NEXT IN YOUR LIFE, WHAT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING? WHO DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING IT WITH? WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING IT?

WHAT OBSTACLES WILL YOU NEED TO OVERCOME FOR THESE DREAMS TO COME TRUE?

DREAMING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Consider the following passages. How do they speak to your obstacles or your beliefs?

PASSAGE

REFLECTION

Ephesians 4:22-24

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Philippians 4:8

8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

1 Peter 1:13

13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

DREAMING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Consider the following passages. How do they speak to your obstacles or your beliefs?

PASSAGE

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Romans 12:1-2

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

REFLECTION

IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES AND LIFE MISSION STATEMENT

Core values are words or statements about what is important to me. They help with integrity, decision-making, and communication.

Look at the list of verbs below and consider your key life areas, strengths, gifts, dreams and values. What are three or four verbs that characterize who you are, how you serve, and/or how others benefit? Ask those close to you for their input on what they see in you.

- What defines me when I am at my best?*
- What upsets me or makes me mad? Is there a value you see on the list that correlates?*

Once you have several noted try to look for themes between some of the values. Do there seem to be any connections? Narrow it down to 3 core value.

Accountability	Friendship	Peace
Achievement	Fun	Perseverance
Adaptability	Future generations	Personal fulfillment
Adventure	Generosity	Power
Altruism	Giving back	Pride
Ambition	Grace	Recognition
Authenticity	Gratitude	Reliability
Balance	Growth	Resourcefulness
Beauty	Harmony	Respect
Being the best	Health	Responsibility
Belonging	Home	Risk-taking
Career	Honesty	Safety
Caring	Hope	Security
Collaboration	Humility	Self-discipline
Commitment	Humor	Self-expression
Community	Inclusion	Self-respect
Compassion	Independence	Serenity
Competence	Initiative	Service
Confidence	Integrity	Simplicity
Connection	Intuition	Spirituality
Contentment	Job security	Sportsmanship
Contribution	Joy	Stewardship
Cooperation	Justice	Success
Courage	Kindness	Teamwork
Creativity	Knowledge	Thrift
Curiosity	Leadership	Time
Dignity	Learning	Tradition
Diversity	Legacy	Travel
Environment	Leisure	Trust
Efficiency	Love	Truth
Equality	Loyalty	Understanding
Ethics	Making a difference	Uniqueness
Excellence	Nature	Usefulness
Fairness	Openness	Vision
Faith	Optimism	Vulnerability
Family	Order	Wealth
Financial stability	Parenting	Well-being
Forgiveness	Patience	Wholeheartedness
Freedom	Patriotism	Wisdom

IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES AND LIFE MISSION STATEMENT

Examples include:

I value God as my Father, therefore I will give priority to spending time with, listening, speaking, enjoying and worshipping Him.

I value purity of life therefore I will guard what my eyes see through books, magazines, tv, movies or the internet

.I value freedom to choose, therefore I recognize my privilege and responsibility to receive counsel, think, plan and endeavor to make wise choices.

As you write out your core values, consider your key life areas, strengths and gifts, and dreams.

I VALUE _____

THEREFORE _____

I VALUE _____

THEREFORE _____

I VALUE _____

THEREFORE _____

I VALUE _____

THEREFORE _____

I VALUE _____

THEREFORE _____

IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES AND LIFE MISSION STATEMENT

A personal mission statement is a declaration by a person that tells who they are, why they exist, and what are to be the results of their lives.

WHAT QUESTIONS DOES A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT ANSWER?

Who am I? What am I? Why do I exist? What do I do? How do I do it? What are my areas of influence? What are the results to the ones I serve?

After you consider which verbs best display your values, construct a sentence that includes all of the verbs and that embodies what you aspire your life to be about. Ask those close to you for their input on what they see in you. They can choose their own verbs for you, and then construct their own sentence with them. Draw from your key life areas, strengths and gifts, dreams, values, and action words to develop your personal mission statement.

EXAMPLES OF MISSION STATEMENTS:

- My mission is to equip God's people to do His work, reflecting Jesus and His Kingdom while helping others to do the same.*
- I exist to glorify God by loving Him and people; by strengthening, encouraging and building up my family, leaders, and others and to help them reach their God given potential.*
- I exist to facilitate affirm, refresh and equip people in ways that will help them be more fulfilled and effective in their personal life, family, ministries and work.*
- My mission is to passionately love God and my family, to enjoy His creation, to stretch and network God's people for the sake of those who have never heard of Christ.*

_____ 'S MISSION STATEMENT ABOUT ME:

_____ 'S MISSION STATEMENT ABOUT ME:

_____ 'S MISSION STATEMENT ABOUT ME:

MY MISSION STATEMENT:

IMMANUEL JOURNALING

WHAT IS IMMANUEL JOURNALING?

From presenceandpractice.com

Immanuel Journaling is a writing exercise or practice that helps us to explore our life events, especially our interior life including our thoughts, feelings and body sensations with our good God, Immanuel. It is a simple process to help you become aware of God's compassionate presence in the painful as well as mundane moments of your life.

Slowing down enough to pause, give thanks (if you are able) and then follow an elegant process of sensing God's response has been transformative to people across the nation and the world. People continue to share stories of peace and transformation as well as reconciling relationships. Give it a try and see how God's presence can change your life today.

BEFORE BEGINNING TAKE A MOMENT

Take a few deep breaths and slow yourself down

Be fully present to the presence of Immanuel

Ask the Holy Spirit to ground your spirit in the love of God

IMMANUEL JOURNALING

INTERACTIVE GRATITUDE

Think of something you are grateful for and share your heart with God.

Take a moment to pause, listen to God's response. Write down your impression of how God would respond to your gratitude

HEALING IS FOUND NOT IN THE ABSENCE OF PAIN, BUT IN THE
PRESENCE OF IMMANUEL.

IMMANUEL JOURNALING

THOUGHT RHYMING

These are meant to be written from God's perspective, write God's response as if he were writing directly to you.

Imagine God seeing your situation, environment, movement and inner experience
(I see you pacing around and worrying right now)

Imagine God hearing all your thoughts that are spoken and unspoken
(I hear you judging yourself)

IMMANUEL JOURNALING

THOUGHT RHYMING

These are meant to be written from God's perspective

Imagine God who knows you well, validating your experience with compassion
(I understand how angry you are)

Imagine God calling your name lovingly and simply enjoying being with you. How do you perceive God might be with you and speaking to you in a kind, tender and loving way? Take a moment to enjoy his loving presence.

(I am glad to interact with you anytime, including this moment of pain)

IMMANUEL JOURNALING

THOUGHT RHYMING

These are meant to be written from God's perspective

Imagine God assuring you that He has the power to help you and give you everything you need.

(I will help you see more clearly who I am through this)

When you are finished, do a shalom check. Ask yourself, "do I feel shalom, deep inner peace, about what I have written today? Is what I have written in line with God's character?"

AS YOU ARE ABLE, CONSIDER READING YOUR INTERACTION
WITH GOD OUT LOUD TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

A BOOK SUGGESTION

How to Walk Into a Room: The Art of Knowing When to Stay and When to Walk Away, by Emily P. Freeman

What do you do when you start to feel a shift and must decide if it's time to make a change?

When it comes to navigating big decisions about when to stay and go, how can we know for sure when the time is right?

Though we enter and exit many rooms over the course of our life—jobs, relationships, communities, life stages—knowing how and when it's time to leave is a decision that rarely has a clear answer. You may be asking questions like:

How do I know if it's time to move on?

What if I stay and nothing changes?

What if I leave and everything falls apart?

How to Walk into A Room will help you:

- Know and name the caution flags in your current spaces
- Discern the difference between true peace and discomfort avoidance
- Navigate endings even when there is no closure
- Find peace for when you feel ready but it isn't time
- Find courage for when it's time but you don't feel ready

For anyone standing in a threshold, here's a book to help discern the how, when, and what now of walking out of rooms and into new ones with peace, confidence, and a whole heart.

A LITURGY FOR PEACE AFTER A DECISION HAS BEEN MADE

By Katie LaRavia

*Lord You know that I sought wisdom, counsel and guidance
both from You and from those whom You have placed in my life.*

*I have prayed many prayers,
for discernment,
for detachment,
for direction,
and for the hardest of them all to pray: for Your will to be done.*

*But now the time has come for me to release the decision that I made,
leaving it in Your hands,
trusting that You will now do what needs to be done.*

*I ask now that You bestow upon me one final gift:
a peace that surpasses all understanding
as I wait to see what happens next.*

Amen.