

PURSUING GOD'S WILL TOGETHER

In her book, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, Ruth Haley Barton stresses the importance of both applying personal discernment practices and practicing discernment together.

PERSONAL DISCERNMENT PRACTICES

About two-thirds of her book is devoted to *preparation*.

- Practicing personal rhythms of rest, re-creation, and retreat
- Practicing solitude and silence
- Listening prayer and Scriptures engagement
- Self-examination and confession
- A commitment to community-building
(with a special attentiveness to shared beliefs and values)

PRACTICING DISCERNMENT TOGETHER

About one-third of her book is about the *practice of discerning together*. Key corporate practices include:

- Gather and equip the right team of intercessors
- Foster a culture where it's safe to share
(practice healthy listening behaviors – learner vs. judger)
- Anchor to shared values
- Prayers for "indifference"
(a desire to only desire God's will – as "selfless as a shadow")
- Prayers for wisdom
- "Notice without judging"
(notice everything relevant to the situation - internal and external - without judging, at least at first)
- Identify and work with options
- Identify questions beneath the questions
- Seek transformation through conflict
(Practice Matthew 7 and Matthew 18.)
- Maintain confidentiality
- A commitment to doing the will of God as it is revealed to us

Remember:

- Don't confuse God-think with group-think!
- Don't assume that Christian people agree on what it means to act Christianly, let alone that they are psychologically and spiritually healthy enough to carry out the agreed-upon behaviors
- Discernment often takes time.
It rarely drops from the skies fully formed.

READY. SET. GO!

God is the One with the vision for our lives and the church. It is our job to discover what He has in mind, not to invent something He can get excited about. –Reggie McNeal

GET READY (PREPARATION)

Clarify the question

Gather the right people

Affirm (or reaffirm) guiding values and principles

GET SET (ADOPTING A LISTENING POSTURE)

Pray for indifference

Test for indifference (search your heart, be attentive to "tells")

Pray for wisdom (with humble confidence)

GO (DISCERNING GOD'S WILL TOGETHER)

Listen to what brought the question to the group

Listen to each other

Listen to pertinent facts and information

Listen to inner dynamics

Practice silence – create space

Reconvene and listen again

Select and weigh the options

Agree together

Seek inner confirmation

DO (WALKING IN HUMBLE CONFIDENCE)

Humbly take your next steps in faith

Continue to listen