

Pilgrim Center of Hope

A Catholic Evangelization Mission of guiding people to Christ & The church

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Discerning God's Will Day of Recollection

How Does God Guide Us?

Some Practical Principles for Knowing God's Will

(Based on Peter Kreeft's book "Making Choices")

We all have to make decisions in life. We are faced with decisions about relationships, marriage, children, use of time, jobs, homes, money, holidays, possessions, giving, and so on. Some of these are big and some smaller. In many cases, it is important that we make the right decisions.

We need God's help!

Guidance springs out of our relationship with God.

God has a plan for our lives... *For we are his handwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them.* (Ephesians 2:10).

Sometimes we worry: "I'm not sure what God's plan is for my life? Will God's plans be good? Will His plan make me happy?"

We need not fear. It is written many times in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, Do not be afraid.

Jeremiah 29:11.... *For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

So how do I begin?

1) The first principle is embarrassingly simple: LOVE GOD.

- IF you love God, you will love his will; if you love his will you will want to do his will; if you want to do his will, you will want to know his will (in order to do it); and if you want to know his will, you *will!*
- Jesus said that all who seek, find. This refers to finding God and His will. Not all who seek wealth, glory or even health will get it; but all who seek God will find Him!
- Our faith is important. A child-like faith, docile and one who trusts!

2) The Holy Spirit - God guides us when we want to do His will.

- We must have an attitude like Mary's.... *I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to do whatever he wants.* (Luke 1:38) Docility to the Holy Spirit.
- A relationship with the Trinity.
- We know the Holy Spirit is present...Christ sent the Holy Spirit and He still remains! You cannot see the wind, but you can certainly see the difference it makes!

- In Baptism we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit – as we discover as we mature in our faith.

3) **The third principle concerns Obstacles**

Why, with such powerful help available, does discernment seem so difficult?

- Not because there's not enough power, but because there are obstacles that we put in the way. What is that obstacle? SIN
- But the obstacle is not sin as such, but unrepented sin. None of us are free of sin. Saints are simply sinners saved. When sin is unacknowledged and unrepented, it sticks to our spirit and blinds our minds. Repented sin is like garbage put out for the divine garbage man to take away. Unrepented sin is like garbage left in the kitchen that stinks up the air around all the food.
- Sometimes we rationalize sin rather than repenting of it and it blocks our discernment.
- Once our will is out line with God's, only 3 things can happen:
 - a) Repent and restore the relationship with God and with it the power of discernment OR
 - b) We keep walking away from God, knowing what we are doing but do it anyway; OR
 - c) We walk away but rationalize it because we can't endure the truth that we're turning our backs on God, on Truth, on the source and standard of all goodness, including our own.
- To repent is a matter of the HEART, the MIND and the BEHAVIOR.
- The Heart is the captain of the soul. The mind- we bring every thought into captivity to Christ.
- And Behavior because a life of good virtues will help us live a healthy life!
- Analogy: The WILL is the Captain, the MIND is the navigator and the hands and feet are the engines of the ship. The whole ship needs to turn (to repent).

Unforgiveness is another obstacle

- How important is forgiveness?
- So important that Christ commanded us to mortgage our very salvation on it.
- An unforgiving heart is so at odds with the heart of God, whose very nature is to forgive, that it cannot discern God's will.
- So before trying to discern God's will, be sure you aren't holding a grudge against anyone.
- Abraham Lincoln said...*the way to conquer your enemy is to make him your friend!*

4) **Prudence** - is reason, intelligence, and practical wisdom.

- When we become Christian we are not called to abandon *COMMON SENSE*.
- The New Testament writers often encourage us to think and not to be discouraged.
- We must learn to be patient with the slow rhythms of nature and grace. How do we do this? Choosing the good, using our common sense---it's a daily effort. Virtues in reality are habits of doing good.
- The way we progress is to try to consciously do the opposite of our weakness. If we are impatient, let us try to be more patient; another words exercise that virtue.

Cultivating habits is like cultivating crops; it takes time. Habits can fertilize other habits.

- Practicing the Presence of God. Is being aware of God's presence in everything.
- Let's not compartmentalize God.

Discerning God's will is the fruit of a healthy relationship with the Triune God. The fruit of prayer. And prayer is a dialogue with God. The scriptures tell us how God spoke many times to people. So many times, we do all the talking and hardly listen! Prayer is very important part of our relationship with God.