

DISCERNMENT Seeking God In Every Situation

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Introduction

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven
in Christ.*

*Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made
to be holy and faultless before him in love,
marking us out for himself beforehand, to be adopted sons
[and daughters],
through Jesus Christ.*

*Such was his purpose and good pleasure,
to the praise of the glory of his grace,
his free gift to us in the Beloved,
in whom, through his blood, we gain our freedom, the for-
giveness of our sins.*

*Such is the richness of the grace
which he has showered on us
in all wisdom and insight.*

*He has let us know the mystery of his purpose,
according to his good pleasure which he determined before-
hand in Christ,*

*for him to act upon when the times had run their course:
that he would bring everything together under Christ, as
head,*

*everything in the heavens and everything on earth.
And it is in him that we have received our heritage,
marked out beforehand as we were,
under the plan of the One who guides all things*

*as he decides by his own will,
chosen to be,
for the praise of his glory,
the people who would put their hopes in Christ before he
came.*

*Now you too, in him,
have heard the message of the truth and the gospel of your
salvation,
and having put your trust in it
you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the
Promise,
who is the pledge of our inheritance,
for the freedom of the people whom God has taken for his own,
for the praise of his glory.* Eph 1:3-14

Discernment is a fascinating subject. It broadens our horizon, challenges our faith, raises our hopes, seeks to allay our fears. We all want to know “how to discern,” how to know God’s will. Undoubtedly, you are hoping that this book might give you the answer—or at least provide a reasonable outline: which prayer to say, when to say it, and how to understand the answer.

Such a hope, however, will lead to disappointment, for that is not where *Discernment: Seeking God in Every Situation* is going to take you. In reality, there is no magic prayer, no special time, no favored sign or gesture that reveals God’s will for us—except Jesus. Jesus is the Father’s will for us. Jesus, the Word of the Father spoken in time through the sign of a Virgin. He is the Father’s will for us in every situation. Should you decide to continue, knowing that this will be the direction taken, begin by relaxing. Sit back; hum a hymn; quietly praise and thank

the Father for making it as simple as a Word. Say that Word: "Jesus." Remember: it is through Jesus that we are held in the arms of a loving Father, a Father who cares for us, loves us, and forgives us.

Begin by praying a psalm to relax you. Two short ones are printed below. Pray one or the other, slowly, peacefully. Savor the words, the promises given, the hopes instilled.

*I rely, my whole being relies,
Yahweh, on your promise.
My whole being hopes in the Lord,
more than watchmen for daybreak:
more than watchmen for daybreak
let Israel hope in Yahweh.*

Ps 130:5-7

*Yahweh, my heart is not haughty,
I do not set my sights too high.
I have taken no part in great affairs,
in wonders beyond my scope.
No, I hold myself in quiet and silence,
like a little child in its mother's arms,
like a little child, so I keep myself.
Let Israel hope in Yahweh
henceforth and for ever.*

Ps 131

We want to know about discernment, and the Lord wants to teach us. And so, continue to relax in prayer. Don't worry about what God might say or do. After all, we've been chosen and called His very own, so that the work God has begun in us can be brought to completion (cf., Phil 1:6). We want to learn about discernment, so let's expect that God will teach us.

As we seek the Father's will, therefore, allow the Spirit to emerge from within. God's power is there—the power of Jesus, the power of the Father's love—so expect to see it, and know it. God desires to surprise us with the Love that is within, so pray that you will be ready for the unexpected. Just as we need to be ready for the unexpected, just as we need to be ready to respond to a variety of gestures from our loved ones, so we need to be open to a variety of gestures from the Father. If the two on the road to Emmaus had readied themselves for the unexpected, they would have known the Father's will. They were not ready; they were bound to the routine. Jesus, however, desired to appear in an unexpected, yet ordinary way—through a simple conversation and the sharing of bread. They did not learn the Father's will because they did not recognize God's will present to them in Jesus.

Finally, as we relax and expect the surprise of the Father's love, we will learn God's ways. Just as a child relaxes in his/her father's arms and expects to float, so too can we learn how to swim in God's Love by following the child's example of trusting and relaxing. The Lord wants to teach us the Father's will. Of this, be certain.

This book, however, can only point the way. It is the Father who teaches us; the Father, through Jesus, Who takes us; the Father, in Jesus' Spirit, Who guides us. God will do as promised. The Father will meet us in His Son, Jesus (God's will for us) and take us beyond to the Kingdom. For this reason the Word became flesh, so that the Father's will—Jesus, the Word of Love spoken from the Father's heart—could be made known (cf., 1 Jn 1:1-4).

Chapter 1

Tool #1: The Biblical View

The first tool we inspect is an historical one—looking at the biblical person’s presupposition in relating to God. We do this to discover what a biblical person expected; where did he/she find God, how did he/she interpret God’s responses? Simply stated, scholars tell us that biblical men and women (the people of Israel), bound to their God in a covenant experience, held a basic, faith-view of all reality. This stance leads to four assumptions.

Assumption One: God is at work in all believers drawing them to Himself.

The people of Israel believed that they encountered God on two levels: in life and in history. They were conscious that God spoke to individuals, giving them direction and guidance (cf., Gen 15), and believed that God spoke to them throughout Israel’s history (e.g., Is 45). This latter expectation allowed believers to hear God’s speaking and see God’s self-revelation in the events of the past.

This insight formed the people of Israel into a unified body, enabling the individual to be one with all Israel, even when separated by great distances or periods of time. Hearing and responding now became a communal