

Spiritual Discernment Process

A) Question.

What is God's will for the roles of women and men in Christ's church at Glen Elm?

B) Personal Preparation

1. Body Life – Honouring Christ. Honouring one-another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Ephesians 4:1-5,

Write one thought about honouring Christ and one thought about honouring one-another.

2. Loyalty

Loyalty to Jesus is demonstrated by submission to Christ and alignment of my will with His.

John 3:22-31 What words/ideas speak to submission and alignment of a disciple's life to Jesus?

3. Trust

There is no predetermined outcome. Our church-family has entrusted us to represent it because the family trusts that we are Spirit-led disciples of the Lord. Am I willing to follow where the Spirit leads this group to?

4. State the Obvious

- My present position:
- List the various sources that influence your present position.
- Group list. Do the sources deserve equal weight? More weight? Most?
- Even though we are recognized as Spirit-led people, it is not likely that all of us are in the same place in regard to the question before us.

How is this possible?

What will it take for our group to arrive together at the place that the Spirit desires to lead us to?

5. Handle God's Word Thoughtfully

- Context – culture, environment, events.
- Teachings Central to the Gospel and Teachings Not Central to the Gospel.
- Clear Teachings and Not So Clear Teachings.
- Purpose – Poetry or Special Literature. Primary Teaching and Secondary Understandings.

When we handle God's Word thoughtfully we will honour Him. To gain understanding the background information, the setting/situation, and the purpose of the text must be considered. If these things are not clear, then we must proceed with caution. Separating scripture from its context or intended purpose can be misleading.

Always hold the Clear Teachings and Central to the Gospel Teachings above the Not So Clear and Not So Central. The Not So Clear and Not So Central need to be discerned within the context of the Clear and Central.

Always remember that God is most interested in the heart, and not much interested in religious forms, rules, or regulations.

C) The Discernment Process

Definition of Indifference

- Ability to be impartial, objective, open-minded, fair-minded, just, equitable.
- Trying to discern between my spirit/someone's spirit and God's Spirit.

Having spiritual indifference depends upon personal spiritual disciplines of discernment:

- Being self-aware of Spirit vs flesh.
- Being honest – transparent with myself and with others.
- Trust – willing to accept that which is expressed by the group is of the Spirit.
- Consider Romans 12:1-2 – a passive imperative. A command to allow God to change you. This is a posture of yielding and being submissive to God. It is the ongoing process of maturity.

1. Pray for wisdom and indifference. (I am committed to follow God's will as it is revealed.)

Reflecting upon the scriptures above and the discussion to this point, spend time in prayer as you consider the following questions.

- How do I demonstrate loyalty to Jesus? Am I willing?
- How do I demonstrate honour to God and His community? Am I willing?
- How do I demonstrate my acknowledgement that God's Spirit lives within each person participating in this discernment process? Am I willing?
- How do I demonstrate my willingness to show indifference to my present position? Am I willing?

2. Test for indifference. (Each person responds with one of the following.)

- I recognize that I have a preference; I am praying for indifference. (So that I do God's will.)
- I recognize that I have a preference; I am also committed to indifference. (I am committed to the discernment of the group.)
- I am indifferent. (I am committed to the discernment of the group.)

3. Listen and Discuss. (We need to listen and speak as vessels of Spirit.)

- Share information, wisdom, experience, perspectives without challenge, refuting, or attempting to sway.
- The goal is to understand the subject deeply, clarify the options, and improve upon potential pathways.

4. Articulate and Confirm what has been Discerned.

5. Break and allow prayer time to listen to Spirit.

6. Reconvene and listen for Consolation or Desolation.

- Consolation – a spirit of peace from God.
- Desolation – a spirit from God, stirring you up to pay attention because something is very important here. This is not a spirit of anxiety or fear, both of which come from the flesh.

7. Test for Agreement. (Each person responds with one of the following.)

- I agree unequivocally.
- I agree but with expressed reservations – I feel heard and can move forward.
- I don't agree but feel comfortable deferring to the wisdom of others.
- I don't agree and cannot go forward. (More time must be given for prayer and reflection. Break and reconvene at a later date for more listening, discussion, articulating, confirming, and testing for agreement.)

8. Owning the Outcome.

- When our team has articulated, confirmed, and completed the test for agreement on what has been discerned, we will all own and we will all be guided by the outcome.

9. Implementation.

- Acknowledge and affirm roles that women and men already fulfill.
- What next? Implement small experimental efforts to nurture, learn, share stories of what God is doing, and to build momentum. Name it as God's work.
- Let it grow or allow it to die.