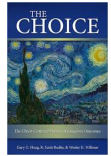




“Four Spiritual Practices for Discerning Direction”

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This workshop sketches four practices for Spirit-led strategic planning rooted in the example of early church leaders in the New Testament.



(1) Scripture – Identify one (or more) Bible passages that relate to the work your church or ministry, or chose a text that closely relates to a current situation. Practice “sacred reading” (a.k.a. *Lectio Divina*) by reading the text(s) aloud multiple times together. This helps us hear what we miss on one pass.

“The Bible is primarily a book not for information, but of formation, not merely a book to be analyzed, scrutinized, and discussed but a sacred book to nurture us, to unify our hearts and minds.”
Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation*, xxv.

Romans 12:1-2. *“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”*

(2) Silence – After reading God’s Word, create margin for the Spirit to speak and take a posture of listening. Give each person a journal and time to report to what they heard. As a spiritual director, my wife, Jenni, suggests you give each person a lollipop. Don’t reconvene until you have savored the entire piece of candy.



“Thoughts continue to jostle in your head like mosquitoes. To stop this jostling you must bind the mind with one thought, or the thought of One only. An aid to this is a short prayer, which helps the mind to become simple and unified.”
Theophane the Recluse in *Prayer* by Richard Foster, 124.

Matt 20:30-34. *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.”* Other examples: *Give me your words, Triune God. Teach us from your Word, Holy Spirit. For your namesake, lead and guide us Lord.*

(3) Sharing – Because people often have different perspectives linked to organizational direction, rather than trying to control the direction of the group, give each person an opportunity to share how they believe how the Spirit may be guiding the group after reading of God’s Word and taking time in solitude.

“Some of us live our lives so chock-full that the Lord can’t get our attention long enough to make Himself known...Our hurrying disease – or urgency addiction – sucks spiritual life out of us and turns us into hollow performance machines...” Bruce Demarest, *Satisfy Your Soul*, 126.

Acts 13:1-3. *While they were fasting and praying the Spirit spoke and provided general direction.*

(4) Supplication – Based on what each of the group members reported, lift up specific petitions in response. God may give confidence to pursue a path about which the group has been unsure, or He may lead the group in a new direction. The aim is to discern direction and depend on God (cf. *The Choice*, 58-59).

“Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit’s power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power.”
Hudson Taylor in *The Prayer Motivator* by Daniel Whyte III, 91.

Phil 4:6-8. *Don’t worry. Lift up specific petitions. Focus on what is true and right. Experience God’s peace.*

Which of these four practices is most difficult for you to pursue individually? Corporately?

How might these practices help you address a present or future challenge in a church or ministry setting?