

**Discerning the Will of God**  
**Being with Jesus to Know the Will of God**  
Lesson 3

**This week's main objective:** Practice discernment as an ongoing process of prayerful attunement with the Spirit of Jesus involving clearing competing distractions and choosing in congruence with Jesus' life, teachings, and Spirit.

**Overview:** Tuning in to the will of God is an ongoing process that the Lord develops in us as we learn from the indwelling Spirit of Jesus; attunement is refined through praying, engaging with friends and mentors, and meditating on the presence of the Lord and on his life and stories. We look at our own strivings so we can become honest about what desires and distractions compete with the Lord's will. We develop the attuned heart both privately and in community. How do we know that we have discerned the Lord's will? We sense the Lord's will as we find congruence with scripture, with Jesus' life and teachings, with the fruit of the Spirit, and with our own faith-building experiences with God. We look to see what increases faith, hope, and love.

In some instances, what we are called to live through feels unbearable. We wonder how our circumstances could possibly be the will of God. When we find God's will to be indiscernible and our circumstances to be unbearable, we hold onto one another, sheltered by borrowed faith, hope, and love. The church becomes Jesus.

**Principle teaching points:**

1. Imitate Jesus to see through his eyes thereby prioritizing the vulnerable while becoming love.
2. Practice attunement to the Spirit of Jesus who directs us toward clearing out competing motives to make choices that bring faith, hope, and love.
3. Offer and listen to the indwelling Spirit of Jesus in one another.

**Guiding scriptures:** John 13:34; Ephesians 5:1-2; Luke 4:18; Mark 9:35; Luke 12:16-21; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Matthew 26: 39

**1. Main teaching point 1: Imitate Jesus to see through his eyes thereby prioritizing the vulnerable while becoming love.**

**John 13:34** "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

- The Lord's will is to develop in each believer a heart of love, that is, the character of Jesus.

**Ephesians 5:1-2** "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

- To imitate Jesus is to come into close relationship with him, intentionally looking through his eyes, and so seeing his will with attunement to his Spirit and mind.

**Luke 4:18** “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners.”

**Mark 9:35** “Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, ‘Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.’”

1. Power, resources, and position are unimpressive to God and may get in the way of seeing God. As the mind of Jesus is formed in us, the values and desires of the world will be turned upside down. The first shall be last; the greatest will be the least; the most important will be the servant.
2. Jesus prioritizes the vulnerable; so should we. He surrounds himself with the poor, the mourners, the meek, those who hunger and thirst to be right with God, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted and insulted. He sees these people as blessed, happy, and in God’s favor. Though the world is unjust, those in the kingdom experience justice.
3. Meditating on each of Jesus’ stories and sayings with a view toward discernment, ask the following three questions.
  - a. What does Jesus prioritize?
  - b. What does Jesus reveal to be the will of God?
  - c. Where are people in conflict with the will of God?

### **Questions for Discussion:**

As a class, meditate on one of the paradoxical teachings of Jesus, Luke 12:16-21, answering the three questions.

1. What does Jesus prioritize?
2. What does Jesus reveal to be the will of God?
3. Where are people in conflict with the will of God?

### **2. Main teaching point 2: Practice attunement to the Spirit of Jesus who directs us toward clearing out competing motives to make choices that bring faith, hope, and love.**

**Matthew 26:39** “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’”

1. Our one desire becomes to be in synchrony with the Spirit of Jesus, and so to join in the Lord’s purposes.
2. We ask the Lord to help in setting aside preference for one option over another to instead become neutral, that is, spiritually indifferent, to attachments for preferred choices.
3. Prayer, journaling, and talking openly with a mentor or trusted friend can help us come to know our underlying motives.
4. Emotions often indicate that which may be unconsciously motivating us. We pay attention to the feelings and thoughts that arise around various options. We need to give words to unarticulated bodily tension and defensiveness. Is there a lie involved in any of our desires?
5. We pray with Jesus, “Not as I will but as you will.”

**1 Corinthians 2:14-16** “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are

discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

- The Spirit of Jesus is the template for comparing options; in considering options, we look for what brings greater faith, hope, and love, as these are a sign of the Spirit.

**2 Corinthians 3:18** “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

- Praying at the start of each day, set the intention to know and do the Lord’s will; at the end of each day, ask where the Lord’s will has been done. Throughout each day, practice times of sitting with attention to the Lord. We invite transformation that we would align with the Spirit of Jesus.

### **Question for Discussion:**

How might the church at Hillcrest be transformed when more people decide to pray at the start of each day, setting the intention to know and do the Lord’s will and at the end of each day, asking where the Lord’s will has been done?

### **Main Teaching point 3: Offer and listen to the indwelling Spirit of Jesus in one another.**

1. When gathering as a discernment group, in prayer, acknowledge the loving presence of the Lord enveloping the group. Pray together to fully desire the Lord’s will and that the Lord’s will be done. Pray together that you would have the mind of Jesus through his Spirit.
2. State the question in yes/no terms allowing for advantages and disadvantages of an option to be noted.
3. Talk honestly about inner experiences.
4. To keep from solidifying opposing camps within the discernment group, each person should speak to both weaknesses and strengths of all of the various options under consideration. Holding opposites in mind can allow for synergy to develop as new realizations come.
5. In discerning the will of God together, look for congruence with scripture, with Jesus’ life and teachings, with the fruit of the Spirit, and with previous faith-building experiences with God.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. What is challenging about speaking to both sides of an issue?
2. What changes, if any, might you make in your practice of attunement to the Spirit of Jesus to be ready to join in a group discernment?

For further inspiration, read *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, *Practicing the Presence of Christ* by Brother Lawrence, and *The Way of Discernment* by Elizabeth Liebert

We look forward to next week, when we will explore seeking discernment as a community.