

Week #6

A Word from Stephen Jones: [Week 6 Intro.mp4](#)

TIME IN THE WORD:

RE-READ AND REFLECT ON JOHN CHAPTER 9

John 9 is a profoundly disturbing passage, particularly for those who have been in and around institutionalized religion for a long time. And if we're honest, we probably find ourselves depicted somewhere in this story. Take time to reflect and journal your thoughts on where you find yourself individually in this story and where you find this leadership group in this story.

What Journey are You On?

Discernment begins when we acknowledge that we lack the wisdom we need and that, without divine intervention, the best we can do is stumble around in the dark. Discernment begins when we are in touch with our blindness and are willing to cry out from that place, "My teacher, I want to see."

The most important step a group of leaders can take toward becoming a community for discernment is for each individual to be on the journey from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight. If individuals in the leadership group are not on an intentional journey of transformation in which God is clearing away the debris, it won't matter what kind of process the group has in place or what kind of verbiage they use about discerning and doing the will of God. It won't matter how intelligent the leaders are, how much theological education they have or how much business acumen they possess. The obstacles will prevent them from seeing the work of God that is unfolding right in front of their eyes.

Spiritual discernment is given to those who are spiritual, the Scriptures tell us, and those who are spiritual discern all things (1 Cor 2:12-16). Therefore, the most important prerequisite for discernment at the leadership level is that everyone in the leadership group is on an intentional journey of transformation—from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight. And Jesus is right there with us saying to each one of us, "I have come into this world so that those who do not see may see."

WEEK #6 PRACTICE: *Revisit a practice from Weeks 1 to 4*

Corporate discernment begins with attending to the spiritual formation of each individual leader. Romans 12–15, in particular, is focused on how we are to live out our faith in practical ways with each other in community, and it is in this context that Paul says: "In order for this thing called the body of Christ to work, each of you must resist the process of being conformed to this world and enter into a process of spiritual transformation so that together you can discern and do the will of God" (my paraphrase).

Groups determined to pursue God’s will together must begin by focusing on the dynamic of spiritual transformation in the lives of individuals who comprise the group. The temptation, of course, is to skip the necessary prework and get on with the business of discernment.

As you continue this 40-day journey, you are encouraged to revisit one of the practices from the past 4 weeks. Perhaps one that challenged you most or one where you found deeper intimacy with God. As apprentices of Jesus, we observe him repeatedly retreating into quiet places for personal communion and conversation with the Father.

Here are the 4 practices that have been shared:

- **Prayer:**
 - o *Prayer of Quiet Trust* as described in Psalm 31
 - o *Prayer for indifference* as demonstrated by Mary (“may it be unto me as you have said”) and Jesus (“not my will but yours be done”)
 - o *Prayer for Wisdom* as written in James (“if any of you lack wisdom, ask God”)
- **Engaging the Scriptures:** lectio divina
- **Solitude & Silence:** Withdrawing from our lives and our many distractions in order to give God complete access to our souls. [CLICK HERE](#) to be guided through this exercise
- **Self-knowledge / Self-examination:** “search me and know me,” as David expressed in Psalm 139

Reflect on these questions and take time to journal about your reflections:

- How do you practice self-examination these days? What is God revealing as you invite him to “search me and know me,” as David did in Psalm 139? What is your awareness of the sin patterns or character issues that might affect your leadership if they are not dealt with?
- What is your practice these days for engaging Scripture for spiritual transformation? How is God speaking to you through Scripture? What kinds of things is he saying?
- What is your experience of solitude and silence these days? How are you experiencing God’s transforming presence in this context?

* Content excerpted from: Barton, Ruth Haley. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups (Transforming Resources) (Chapters 1-2).