

# **Discernment: Knowing Which Voice to Follow**

by: Prophetess Sherryann Hernandez

Question: How many of you have prayed “*Lord, increase my discernment,*”?

## **Introduction**


One of the greatest dangers facing the Church today is not open rebellion against God, but obedience without discernment. That may sound surprising at first, because obedience is something we value deeply, and rightly so. But obedience that is not rooted in accurate hearing can still lead us into places God never assigned.

Many of us love the Lord sincerely. We want to serve Him faithfully. We want our lives to count. Yet despite that sincerity, some of us have found ourselves confused, exhausted, or quietly unsettled, not because God failed us, but because we responded to something that sounded spiritual without first discerning whether it was truly Him.

Today is not about condemnation. It is about clarity. It is about understanding that discernment is not optional for a mature believer. It is not a gift reserved

for prophets or leaders. It is a necessary function for every one of us who intends to walk faithfully with Christ.

Jesus Himself established the order clearly when He said:

 John 10:27 (NKJV)

“My sheep **hear** My voice, and I know them, and they **follow** Me.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A27&version=NKJV>

Notice the divine sequence in that verse. Hearing comes before following. Recognition precedes obedience. Jesus did not say that His sheep follow Him and eventually learn His voice along the way. He said they hear, and then they follow. That order matters deeply, because it reveals that ***obedience is only safe when it flows from accurate recognition.***

When obedience is disconnected from discernment, it can easily become mechanical or pressure-driven. We can begin to confuse urgency with assignment, intensity with instruction, and activity with faithfulness.

God does not lead His people through panic. He does not manipulate us with anxiety. His leadership carries clarity, even when it requires courage.

Without discernment, however, we may respond to tone, atmosphere, or expectation instead of to the actual voice of the Shepherd.

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### **The Root Issue: Not Rebellion, But Immaturity**

Now if discernment is so central to walking with God, we must ask an honest question. Why does it appear to be so limited in many areas of the Church? Why do so many sincere believers still find themselves misdirected or overwhelmed?

The answer is not rebellion. The answer is immaturity.

That distinction is crucial. Rebellion implies conscious resistance to God. Immaturity, however, points to something different. It speaks to development that has not yet reached its fullness. It does not question love or sincerity. It identifies an area where growth is still required.

Many of us are not resisting God. We are not intentionally rejecting His will. Instead, we may be

underdeveloped in our discernment, especially when we are placed under emotional pressure, spiritual intensity, or strong external expectations.

The desire to obey may be present, but the ability to weigh and test what we are hearing may not yet be sufficiently strengthened.

Scripture gives us language for this process of growth.



Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV)

“But solid food belongs to those who are of *full age*, that is, those who by *reason of use* have their *senses exercised* to discern both good and evil.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+5%3A14&version=NKJV>

The writer of Hebrews does not say discernment comes automatically with time. He does not say it comes through gifting, title, or spiritual reputation. He says it comes “*by reason of use.*”

That phrase indicates repeated practice, intentional exercise, and steady development. The imagery is almost physical. Just as muscles strengthen through consistent use, spiritual perception strengthens through consistent testing and obedience.

That means discernment is something that grows. It can exist at different levels of maturity. It can be present but not yet refined enough to function clearly under pressure. This removes shame, but it also removes passivity.

If discernment is trained through use, then it will not simply appear because we wish for it. ***It must be developed.***

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## **What Immature Discernment Looks Like**

Let me make this practical, because discernment is not theoretical. It shows up in our everyday decisions.

Imagine a respected church leader approaches two believers and says, “There is a special prayer gathering tonight. It is very important, and we really need everyone there.” Both individuals love God. Both want to be faithful. Neither is rebellious.

The first person immediately feels the weight of the request. The tone sounds urgent. The language feels spiritual. Without pausing to pray or quietly check inwardly, they say yes. Later that evening, however, they sense an unexplained heaviness. They feel drained. There is no clarity, no inward peace, yet they tell themselves that discomfort must be the price of

faithfulness.

The second person hears the same request, but instead of responding instantly, they take a moment. They ask the Lord privately, “Is this for me?” They consider what God has already been speaking to them about their current season. They weigh the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. Whether they ultimately say yes or no, they move forward with steadiness and peace, not compulsion.

The difference between those two responses is not love. It is not devotion. It is discernment maturity.

Hebrews describes mature believers as those whose spiritual senses have been exercised. That does not mean immature believers have never used discernment at all. It means their discernment has not yet been refined through sufficient practice to remain stable under pressure.

Just as a child can hear an adult speaking and recognize the sound of the voice, yet misunderstand the meaning behind the words, immature discernment can recognize spiritual language without accurately identifying the spiritual source behind it.

In those moments, we may respond more to tone than to truth, more to urgency than to instruction, and more to personality than to divine leading.

Discernment, however, does not merely hear what is being said; it identifies where it is coming from. It slows us down long enough to ask, “Holy Spirit, is this You, or is this simply noise wrapped in spiritual language?”

## **What Discernment Really Is — Biblically, Not Mystically**

Before we can train discernment properly, we must define it properly. One of the reasons confusion exists around this topic is because the word “*discernment*” has been stretched in too many directions. For some, it has become mystical and dramatic. For others, it has been reduced to intuition or emotional sensitivity. But Scripture gives us something much more stable and much more grounded.

*Spiritual discernment is the trained ability to recognize what is of God and what is not, made possible because the Holy Spirit lives within us.*


*(see Biblical Foundation at the end of teaching)*

That word trained matters. Discernment does not mature automatically. It strengthens as our spiritual senses are exercised through obedience, testing, and consistent relationship with God. It is not something we arrive at by thinking harder, reacting faster, or trying to appear more spiritual. It develops as we

intentionally walk with the Holy Spirit and learn to weigh what we hear against His Word and His character.

At the same time, discernment is not merely human instinct. It is possible because the Holy Spirit lives within the believer. Without Him, spiritual things cannot be rightly perceived. But because He dwells in us, we are able to grow in recognition. The Holy Spirit makes discernment possible; our obedience and practice make it mature.

Paul explains this limitation clearly:

 1 Corinthians 2:14–15 (NKJV)

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God... because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things...”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2%3A14-15&version=NKJV>

There are dimensions of God’s leading that cannot be grasped by intellect alone. Intelligence is valuable. Reasoning is useful. But discernment operates beyond logic. It requires spiritual perception.

Many of us have experienced this frustration. We have prayed about a decision. We have analyzed every angle. We have replayed conversations in our minds. We have weighed the pros and cons. Yet instead of clarity, confusion increases. That is often because we are attempting to access discernment through analysis rather than through spiritual listening.

Discernment is spiritual, but that does not mean it is emotional. Emotion is powerful, and God created it, but emotion is not a reliable guide. Something can feel urgent and not be from God. Something can feel heavy and still not carry divine authority. Something can stir us deeply and still originate from fear, memory, pressure, or pride.


At the same time, discernment is not intellectual pride. It is not out-reasoning everyone around us. Some of us know Scripture well and can articulate doctrine clearly, yet still struggle to recognize when God is speaking personally. Discernment is not about being clever. It is about being spiritually attuned.

That is why our discernment grows as we learn to live from the Spirit, not merely for God. Living for God speaks to our activity and service. Living from the Spirit speaks to our dependence and direction. Discernment strengthens when our daily posture is one of submission and sensitivity, not performance.

When discernment is reduced to feelings, it becomes unstable. When it is reduced to intellect, it becomes self-reliant. When it is reduced to mysticism, it becomes unsafe.

***Biblical discernment is grounded, sober, anchored in the Word, and led by the Holy Spirit.***

Scripture does not tell us to chase impressions. It tells us to be led.

 Romans 8:14 (NKJV)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8%3A14&version=NKJV>

Being led implies order, pace, and clarity. God’s leadership may stretch us, but it does not torment us. It may call us higher, but it does not drive us into panic.

Over time, as we walk with Him consistently, our discernment develops. Not overnight. Not through hype. But through a steady relationship with Him.

And if any of us have ever said, “I truly believed that was God, but I was wrong,” that does not disqualify

us. It means we are being formed. Discernment is learned in relationship, not in perfection.

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## **What Discernment Is Not — Naming the Counterfeits**

Now that we have defined discernment biblically, we must also identify what it is not. Many believers have not rejected discernment outright; they have simply substituted it. Most confusion does not come from open rebellion. It comes from mislabeling something else as discernment.

If we do not identify the counterfeits, we will continue calling something “God” that He never actually said.

The first counterfeit is *emotion*.

Emotion is real, but it is not a compass. We often assume that intensity equals instruction. If something feels urgent, we assume it must be important. If something feels heavy, we assume it must be holy. But emotions fluctuate. They are influenced by fatigue, stress, past wounds, fear and personal expectations. If we allow our emotions to lead us, we will frequently mistake anxiety for urgency and guilt for conviction.

 Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)


“The heart is deceitful above all things...”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+17%3A9&version=NKJV>

This does not mean we ignore our emotions. It means we do not obey it without testing it. Discernment asks a different question. It does not ask, “How strongly do I feel this?” It asks, “Did God actually say this?”

The second counterfeit is *logic* alone.

Wisdom involves thinking, but discernment transcends reasoning. We can create well-organized arguments for decisions God never initiated. We can talk ourselves into something because it makes sense on paper. But Scripture warns us not to lean solely on our own understanding.

 Proverbs 3:5 (NKJV)


“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+3%3A5&version=NKJV>

God's ways are not irrational, but they are not always predictable to the natural mind. Discernment listens to the Holy Spirit before it calculates.

The third counterfeit is *spiritual activity*.

Busyness can look like obedience. We can assume that if something keeps us active in spiritual environments, it must be God. Yet obedience is measured by alignment, not by volume. Martha was serving, but she was serving beyond what was required in that moment.

 Luke 10:41–42 (NKJV)

“Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed...”


<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+10%3A41-42&version=NKJV>

Activity without discernment leads to burnout.

Alignment without excess leads to peace.

The fourth counterfeit is other people's voices.

God uses people, and we value their counsel. But no human confidence can replace the inward witness of the Spirit of God. Sometimes authority, charisma, or spiritual language can sound convincing, yet still be unsent. Discernment does not reject counsel; it tests it.

 John 10:5 (NKJV)

“Yet they will by no means follow a stranger... for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+10%3A5&version=NKJV>

Notice what Jesus is teaching. The sheep are not safe because they confront every voice aggressively. They are safe because they recognize the voice that belongs to them. In our walk with God, that means learning to recognize how the Spirit of God leads us personally.

Over time, we begin to notice patterns. When God speaks, He does not manipulate us with fear. He does not rush us with panic. He does not pressure us into confusion. His leading may stretch us, but it carries clarity. It may challenge us, but it does not contradict Scripture. It may require courage, but it does not produce chaos.

The more familiar we become with that kind of leading, the less likely we are to be pulled by voices that only sound spiritual. Protection does not come from being suspicious of everyone. It comes from clearly recognizing how God speaks and leads us. When we know how He leads, it becomes much harder to follow what He did not say.

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## **Why Discernment Is Lacking in the Church — Misunderstanding and Immaturity**

Now saints, we need to be honest here. If discernment is so essential to following God, and if Scripture places such importance on hearing His voice accurately, then we must pause and ask a necessary question: why does discernment appear to be so limited in many areas of the Church today?

The answer may not be what we expect.

The issue is not rebellion. It is not that believers do not love God. It is not that the Holy Spirit has stopped speaking. The issue is largely misunderstanding — and misunderstanding has quietly produced immaturity.


For many years, many sincere believers have prayed, ***“Lord, increase my discernment,”*** believing that

discernment is something God simply imparts in greater and greater measure over time.

We assumed that if we needed more discernment, God would deposit it into us. We treated it almost as if it were manna — something that would fall from heaven if we asked sincerely enough.

But Scripture presents a more complete picture.

There is a dimension of discernment that functions as a spiritual gift.


 1 Corinthians 12:10 (NKJV)

“...to another discerning of spirits...”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+12%3A10&version=NKJV>

This refers to the manifestation gift of discerning of spirits. It is sovereignly distributed by the Holy Spirit. It operates in particular moments when spiritual sources must be identified clearly. It is not something we generate by effort. It is imparted according to the Spirit’s will.

However, that is not what Hebrews 5:14 is describing.

 Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV)

“...those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+5%3A14&version=NKJV>

Here, discernment is not described as a sudden manifestation. It is described as trained spiritual perception. The writer speaks of believers whose senses have been exercised — strengthened through consistent use. That language points to development, repetition, and intentional growth.

The gift of discerning of spirits is situational.

The maturity of discernment described in Hebrews is daily.

The gift may operate in specific moments of spiritual manifestation.

The maturity dimension governs everyday decisions, conversations, invitations, influences, and directions.

Most of us need the second constantly.

When believers confuse these two dimensions, they unintentionally become passive. They wait for discernment to increase supernaturally instead of realizing it must also be exercised intentionally. They

pray for clarity, but they do not practice testing. They ask God to sharpen their hearing, but they do not slow down to weigh what they hear.

This misunderstanding quietly produces immaturity.

Not because believers are resistant. Not because they are rebellious. But because they have not been shown that discernment must be developed through use.

If someone believes discernment functions only as a gift, then growth feels entirely dependent on God's initiative. But Hebrews shows us that growth in discernment involves our participation. Our senses are exercised. That implies responsibility. It implies engagement. It implies that discernment strengthens as we intentionally test, obey, and walk closely with God.

This is why discernment often appears weak under pressure. When urgency increases, when personalities are strong, when the atmosphere is intense, believers who have not exercised their spiritual perception tend to react instead of weigh. They respond instead of test. They move instead of pause.

And that is not a failure of the Holy Spirit. It is a gap in understanding.

When we recognize that discernment has both a gift dimension and a maturity dimension, something shifts. We continue to value the gift. We continue to pray for

the Spirit's help. But we also take responsibility for growth. We stop waiting for discernment to fall from heaven and begin exercising it through obedience, testing, and relationship.

That is where maturity begins.

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## **How Discernment Is Developed and Trained**

If the root issue is immaturity rather than rebellion, then the solution is growth. That means discernment is not our permanent limitation. It is an area we can strengthen.

Hebrews tells us discernment develops “by reason of use.” That phrase implies repetition, intentional practice, and steady exercise. Just as physical strength increases through repeated use, spiritual perception increases through consistent obedience and testing.

***Discernment is trained first by learning to pause.***


Many of us lose clarity because we respond too quickly. Urgency compresses reflection. Pressure discourages testing. One of the most powerful disciplines in discernment is simply slowing down long

enough to ask, “Holy Spirit, is this You?”

The Holy Spirit taught me something. He said, “When you feel rushed, that is not Me. I do not rush and push. I lead.” The enemy rushes. He pressures. He forces quick decisions. When we pause, we step out of that pressure and back into discernment. We create space for the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to rise above the external noise.

***Secondly Discernment is also trained by testing, not merely feeling.***

Scripture commands us:

 1 John 4:1 (NKJV)


“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits...”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+4%3A1&version=NKJV>

Testing does not make us suspicious. It makes us wise. We no longer assume that intensity equals instruction. We no longer assume that excitement equals endorsement. We weigh what we hear against Scripture, against the character of Christ, and against

the fruit it produces.

***Thirdly Discernment is strengthened further through obedience in small things.***


 John 7:17 (NKJV)

“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know...”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A17&version=NKJV>

When our heart posture is consistently surrendered, our perception becomes clearer. Repeated obedience sharpens hearing. Repeated delay dulls it.

***Finally, discernment is trained through abiding.***

 John 15:4–5 (NKJV)

“Abide in Me... for without Me you can do nothing.”


<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15%3A4-5&version=NKJV>

Recognition grows from relationship. The closer we remain to the Shepherd, the easier it becomes to recognize the stranger.

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## **Discernment as Preparation for Servanthood**

We cannot serve Christ accurately if we cannot recognize His voice. Servanthood is not merely activity. It is obedience to specific instruction.

 John 7:24 (NKJV)

“Judge with righteous judgment.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+7%3A24&version=NKJV>

Discernment keeps our service clean. It prevents us from rowing hard in the wrong direction. It guards our time, our energy, and our calling from being driven by pressure rather than by assignment.

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## **CONCLUSION**

If we live for an Audience of One, we must be trained

to recognize that One. Because living for God is not the same as listening to God.

Jesus said His sheep hear His voice. That means discernment is not an unreachable mystery. It is a maturity we grow into.

Before God teaches us how to serve Him, He teaches us how to hear Him. Because a servant who cannot discern the Captain's voice may work hard — but work wrong.

And that is why this matters.

### *Prayer for Growth in Discernment*

Father, in the name of Jesus, we thank You that You are not silent. You are faithful to lead Your people. You have given us Your Spirit and Your Word so that we can walk in clarity.

Today, we take responsibility for our growth.

Forgive us for every time we reacted instead of pausing. Forgive us for responding to pressure instead of testing what we heard. Where we have mistaken urgency for instruction, or tone for truth, correct us and steady us.

Holy Spirit, as we walk with You daily, we choose to

exercise our discernment. We choose to slow down. We choose to test what we hear. We choose obedience in the small things so that our spiritual senses can be strengthened.

Guard us from deception — not by making us suspicious, but by deepening our recognition of how You lead. Help us to step out of reaction and into discernment. Help us to move from pressure into peace.

We will not wait for maturity to fall from heaven. We will grow in it through obedience, through testing, and through relationship with You.

Let our yes be aligned.

Let our no be steady.

Let our decisions reflect trained perception.

We commit ourselves to growth.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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### **Biblical Foundation for This Definition**

The following Scriptures form the biblical foundation for

the definition of discernment presented in this teaching. I encourage you to study them carefully and prayerfully.


## Definition

Spiritual discernment is the trained ability to recognize what is of God and what is not, made possible because the Holy Spirit lives within us.

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## Scriptural Foundation


### 1] Training — Discernment Is Developed

 Hebrews 5:14 (NKJV)

“...by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

- “By reason of use” shows that discernment grows through practice.
  - “Senses exercised” reveals development through intentional spiritual maturity.
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## 2 Recognition — Knowing God’s Voice

 John 10:27 (NKJV)

“My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me.”

- Discernment includes recognizing the voice of Christ.
  - Recognition precedes obedience.
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## 3 Testing — Distinguishing What Is of God


 1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

“...test the spirits, whether they are of God...”


- Discernment requires evaluation, not automatic acceptance.
  - Not every spiritual-sounding voice is divine.
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## 4 Spirit-Dependence — Made Possible by the Holy

## Spirit

 1 Corinthians 2:14–15 (NKJV)

“...the things of the Spirit of God... are spiritually discerned.”

 Romans 8:14 (NKJV)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

- Spiritual discernment is possible because the Holy Spirit dwells within believers.
- Without the Holy Spirit, spiritual perception is not accessible.

***Summary: Discernment is both Spirit-dependent and maturity-developed.***

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# SMALL GROUP WORKSHEET

## Discernment: Knowing Which Voice to Follow

(Based on the teaching by Prophetess Sherryann Hernandez )

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### SECTION 1 — PERSONAL REFLECTION

#### 1. Hearing Before Following

 John 10:27

“My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me.”

#### Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever followed something that sounded spiritual but later realized it was not God? What happened?

2. In what ways have you confused urgency with assignment or intensity with instruction?
  3. Why do you think Jesus emphasized hearing before following?
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## SECTION 2 — IMMATURE VS. TRAINED DISCERNMENT

 Hebrews 5:14

“...by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

### 2. Understanding Growth

1. According to Hebrews 5:14, how does discernment grow?
2. What does “by reason of use” practically mean in your daily life?
3. Do you tend to react quickly under pressure, or do you pause to weigh what you are hearing?

## Practical Exercise

This week, intentionally pause before making one important decision and ask:

“Holy Spirit, is this You?”

Write what happened when you paused:

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## SECTION 3 — DEFINING DISCERNMENT CORRECTLY

Definition from the Teaching:

Spiritual discernment is the trained ability to recognize what is of God and what is not, made possible because the Holy Spirit lives within us.

### 3. Clarifying the Two Dimensions

1. What is the difference between:

- The gift of discerning of spirits (1

## Corinthians 12:10)

- The maturity of discernment described in Hebrews 5:14?
2. Why is it dangerous to wait for discernment to “fall from heaven” instead of exercising it?
  3. How has your understanding of discernment changed after this teaching?
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## SECTION 4 — IDENTIFYING THE COUNTERFEITS

From the teaching, the four counterfeits were:

- Emotion
- Logic alone
- Spiritual activity (busyness)
- Other people’s voices

## Group Discussion

For each counterfeit, discuss:

1. How can this look spiritual but still mislead us?
  2. Which counterfeit do you personally struggle with most?
  3. What would discernment look like in that area instead?
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## SECTION 5 — LEARNING TO PAUSE

The teaching emphasized:

God does not rush and push. He leads.  
The enemy rushes and pressures.

Reflection

1. What does rushing usually produce in your life?
2. What does God's leading usually feel like

according to the teaching?

3. What is one practical way you can build the habit of pausing?

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## SECTION 6 — TRAINING YOUR DISCERNMENT THIS WEEK

Based on the sermon, discernment is trained by:

- Pausing
- Testing (1 John 4:1)
- Obeying in small things (John 7:17)
- Abiding (John 15:4–5)

### Personal Commitment

Which one of these four areas needs the most attention in your life right now?

- Learning to pause

- Testing what I hear
- Obedience in small things
- Abiding more intentionally

Write one specific action step for this week:

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## **FINAL GROUP DISCUSSION**

1. Why is discernment essential for servanthood?
2. How does trained discernment protect us from burnout?
3. What would change in our church culture if we all grew in discernment maturity?

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**CLOSING DECLARATION (Read Together)**

**We will not confuse urgency with instruction.**

**We will not mistake tone for truth.**

**We will grow in discernment through use.**

**We will pause before we move.**

**We will follow the Shepherd's voice — and no other.**