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Spiritual Disciplines

The Practice for Spiritual Formation

Compiled from Lenten Services 2007

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Mark 6:30-32

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

Blessing

Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Like Jesus, we must go away from people so that we can be truly present when we are with people. Richard Foster, pg. 108

Isaiah 30:15

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says:
"In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength,
but you would have none of it.

Questions to Answer

Have you been able to identify a "sacred space"- a time and place that is set apart for God and God alone? If not, when might that time be?

Don't you feel a tug, a yearning to sink down into the silence and solitude of God? Don't you long for something more?
Doesn't every breath crave a deeper, fuller exposure to His Presence?

Pray that God would help you in your attempts to establish a rhythm of solitude.

Write down what God is saying to you at this moment.

Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is with you,
he is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you,
he will quiet you with his love,
he will rejoice over you with singing.

It is the discipline of solitude that will open the door. You are welcome to come in and "listen to God's speech in His wondrous, terrible, gentle, loving, all-embracing silence."

Richard Foster, pg. 109

Praying God's Word

Reverencing the King of Glory

I will exalt You, my God and King; I will bless Your name for ever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness is unsearchable.

Psalm 145:1-3

PRAY:

Rejoice that the Creator of the universe is your King.

Take a moment to consider God's awesome majesty and thank Him that He loves you and wants an intimate relationship with you.

Lord, I Draw Near To You

Remember, O Lord, Your compassions and Your mercies, for they are from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your loyal love remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O Lord.

Psalm 25:6-7

PRAY:

Take a moment to ask the Spirit to search your heart and reveal any areas of unconfessed sin. Acknowledge these to the Lord and thank Him for His forgiveness.

Thank God for the truth of these verses, that He is a God who is compassionate and full of mercy, and that He remembers us according to His loyal love.

Committing Myself to My Faithful Creator

In Your unfailing love You have led the people You have redeemed, in Your strength You have guided them to Your holy dwelling. You brought them in and planted them in the mountain of Your inheritance - the place, O Lord, You made for Your dwelling; the sanctuary, O Lord, Your hands have established.

Exodus 15:13, 17

PRAY:

Praise God for redeeming you from the kingdom of darkness, for “planting” you in His kingdom of light at your baptism and for bringing you into His sanctuary to receive His life-giving and life-sustaining Word.

Dear God, Your wish is my command. Your will is my purpose. Your work is my joy. Your Word is my authority. Your Kingdom is my home. Your plans are my aspirations. Your standards are my goals. Your worth is my motivation. Your sovereignty and grace are my assurance. Your power and love are my rest. Your character is my boast. Amen.

Walking in the Spirit

As I walk in the Spirit, I will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh; for they oppose each other, so that I may not do the things that I wish. But, if I am led by the Spirit, I am not under the law. Since I live by the Spirit, I will keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-18, 25

PRAY:

Ask God to help you daily “keep in step with the Spirit” by tapping into those things through which the Spirit of God works:

The Word of God

The Sacraments

Prayer

Focusing on Jesus

Confession & forgiveness

Worship

The Godly counsel of respected leaders and faithful friends etc...

Without silence there is no solitude. Though silence sometimes involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of listening. Simply to refrain from talking, without a heart for listening to God, is not silence. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* pg. 98

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Do not be quick with your mouth,
do not be hasty in your heart
to utter anything before God.

God is in heaven
and you are on earth,
so let your words be few.

A day filled with noise and voices can be a day of silence, if the noises become for us the echo of the presence of God, if the voices are, for us, messages and solicitations of God. When we speak of ourselves and are filled with ourselves, we leave silence behind. When we repeat the intimate words of God that He has left within us, our silence remains intact.

Catherine de Haecck Doherty, *Poustina: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man*, pg. 23

Imagine music without rests.

Exodus 14:13-14

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

God has built “times of silence” into each day. We need simply to take advantage of those “little solitudes” that fill our day.

Psalms 23:1-3

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Solitude

Creating Space for God

Most of us are not very good at sitting with longing and desire-our own or someone else's. It feels tender. It feels vulnerable. It feels out of control. It is a place where one human being cannot fix or fill another, nor can we fix or fill ourselves. It is a place where only God will do.

Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton

A few questions to consider as I attempt to create space for God tonight:

How have I been wanting to be with God, and how has God been wanting to be with me?

What do I need to "unplug from" in order to truly listen to God's still small voice?

Is there anything in particular that seems to be hindering my attempts to honor my commitment to create some space in solitude to allow God to speak?

Am I entering into a place of solitude out of **desire** rather than feeling like it's one more thing I **have** to do?

Ecclesiastes 3:7

a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

Let him who cannot be alone beware of community....Let him who is not in community beware of being alone....Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together pg. 77, 78

Ecclesiastes 5:1

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

Wearing God's Full Armor

My struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, I will put on the full armor of God, so that I may be able to resist in the day of evil, having done all to stand.

Ephesians 6:12-13

PRAY:

Dear Lord, help me each day to put on the armor You have provided. Help me to say with confidence in every situation: "I will stand firm, having girded my waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having covered my feet with the readiness of the Gospel of peace; above all, I will take up the shield of faith with which I will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. I will take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God. With all prayer and petition, I will pray always in the Spirit, and to this end I will be watchful with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."

(based on Ephesians 6:14-18)

The belt of truth:

"Lord, you are absolute truth. I pray that you would protect me from all that is not true and continue to develop my character to reflect your truth."

The breastplate of righteousness:

"I pray, God, that you would protect my emotional center - my heart. Let me never lose heart, but always rest secure in Your perfection and holiness on account of Christ, for He is my righteousness."

The readiness of the Gospel of peace:

"Jesus, your Good News of peace is the reason for my mission. Please prepare my feet so that I am ready to deliver this Gospel of peace in Jesus to every relationship You have established."

The shield of faith:

"Jesus, my faith clings to You alone. Fill up my weakness with a courageous faith that is strong enough to extinguish every flaming arrow of the devil."

The helmet of salvation:

“Lord, I ask you to protect my thinking so that your thoughts and not my own fill my mind. Your thought produced the first life, and Your thoughts still sustain our lives.”

The sword of the spirit:

“Dear God, you have given me a powerful weapon: Your Word. Help me “attack” this life only with the Word of God so that I would be prepared to speak Your Word in every circumstance. I need Your power to help me grow in this area.”

Prayer in the Spirit:

“Spirit of the Living God, I continually bring all prayers to You alone. Through prayer I depend on You and Your strength – not my own. Thank You for this precious gift of communication with You, my powerful and loving Father.”

Enduring All Things For Christ’s Sake

*I desire to be diligent to realize the full assurance of hope to the end. I do not want to become sluggish but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
Hebrews 6:11-12*

PRAY:

Confess to Your Father in heaven any spiritual/relational sluggishness you are aware of in your faith-life. Recommit yourself to the Lord so that you would be diligent in your trust of Him in every circumstance.

*I will consider it all joy whenever I fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of my faith produces endurance. And I will let endurance finish its work, so that I may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.
James 1:2-4*

PRAY:

Thank God for a trial you are facing today.

Ask the Lord to produce endurance in you through that trial.

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden.”
Hebrews 13:17

Sent to Serve (based on Joshua 24:14-27)

Joshua: Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, in whose land you are now living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.

Israelites: **Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! It was the Lord Himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from the land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. And the Lord drove out before us all the nations who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because He is our God.**

Joshua: You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, He will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after He has been good to you.

Israelites: **No! We will serve the Lord!**

Joshua: You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.

Israelites: **Yes, we are witnesses.**

Joshua: Now then, throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Israelites: **We will serve the Lord our God and obey Him.**

We pray for the teachers at our schools...

Prayer prompts from Moms In Touch International

That they will consider each child as a special individual – not just as “their class” or “their job”; that they will have zeal to make a difference for good in each life.

That they will not grow weary in well doing, particularly near the end of the year; that their commitment to excellence and discipline will not wane.

That Christian teachers will be salt and light, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

That godly men and women will fill these positions; that they will make wise decisions regarding curriculum, rules, hiring etc.

That they will have the best interests of our children at heart.

That the teachers will teach with excellence and creativity.

That their speech will be gracious and pleasant.

That those teachers going through difficult personal problems will seek God.

We pray for those who protect, rescue, and preserve our peace...

“You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.” Psalm 32:7,8

“The Lord will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him.” Psalm 41:2

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” John 17:15

Study

*“The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures every day** to see if what Paul said was true.”*

Acts 17:11

Two questions to consider as I approach, with great eagerness, the Word of Life:

Do I read the Scriptures to be **changed** by the truth or to avoid doing the truth?

In what ways do I approach, and experience the Scriptures differently by making a conscious effort to **study** them, rather than by simply reading them?

Study...

“The purpose of Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of study.”

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster pg. 62

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.

Romans 12:2

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Philippians 4:8

Life-Giving Leadership in the Midst of Dangerous Characters...

John 10:1-16, 27-28

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Describe the leadership of Jesus, who in this passage is presented as the **Good Shepherd**.

Consider the 4 dangers described in this passage from John:

The **stranger**, (to God, but not necessarily to us), who under the disguise of friendship lures us away from Jesus (vs. 5)

The **thief** who seeks to rob us (vs. 8, 10a)

The **hired hand** who cannot be trusted (vs. 12-13)

The **wolf** who scatters the sheep (vs. 12)

Where are these enemies present in your own Christian path? How does the Good Shepherd protect His flock...you? How does Jesus' leadership contrast with "the stranger, thief, hired hand, and the wolf?"

What are the lessons to be learned from this story?

Blessing

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me.

John 10:27-28

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.*

*Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.*

Psalms 23:1, 4

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

We pray for those serving in our Armed Forces...

Consider the members of our Armed Forces who serve our country today; for those serving on land, sea and air; for those who safeguard our shores and those called to bear arms in the farthest regions of the world.

Pray: Heavenly Father, keep the men and women serving in the Armed Forces of our nation safe from harm. When they are lonely, encourage them; when they are tired, lift them up, when they are in danger, protect them, and when they face circumstances beyond their control, assure them of Your divine love and care. In all circumstances be their strength and shield.

Consider the families that these men and women have left behind at home.

Pray: Lord Jesus, be a constant source of comfort and care for these families. Remind them that You have promised to never leave them or forsake them. Help them to fix their eyes on You, Jesus, the author and perfecter of their faith.

Consider those who are serving our country who do not know God.

Pray: Lord, we ask that Your Holy Spirit draws the men and women who do not know You into a saving relationship with You. May they be presented with the gospel and a loving Christian witness. Help them turn from the kingdom of darkness and walk in the kingdom of light.

Consider those pastors who also are reserve and guard chaplains, especially those mobilized to active duty and sent far from home.

Pray: Let Your love surround our reserve and guard personnel and chaplains as they faithfully serve our country. Bless their families and congregations during the months of separation, and let them find strength in Your sustaining presence and fellowship in the Body of Christ.

- ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
And who can speak of his descendants?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
- ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
- ¹¹ After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.
- ¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

John 13:1-17

¹It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

²The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

¹⁰Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." ¹¹For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

Guidance

Recognizing and Responding to the Presence of God

Content and questions come from Sacred Rhythms, by Ruth Haley Barton, chapter 7, pg. 110-129

Discernment in its fullness takes a practiced heart, fine-tuned to hear the word of God and the single-mindedness to follow that word in love. It is truly a gift from God, but not one dropped from the skies fully formed. It is a gift cultivated by a prayerful life and the search of self-knowledge.
Ernest Larkin

Two questions to consider as I approach the Lord for guidance:

Is there anything specifically happening in my life today where I deeply need God's guidance?

Am I facing a decision right now that warrants entering into a process of spiritual discernment?

Isaiah 30:19-21

John 10:27-28

Foundations for Guidance

1) Believe in the Goodness of God

Are you confident of God's good intentions toward you in this area? Can you trust Him? Guidance/ Discernment requires interior freedom, a state of wide-openness to God and the capacity to relinquish whatever might keep you from choosing God.

2) Love is our Primary Calling

Are you deeply committed to the grace and mercy of Christ? Ask: What does love call for in this situation? What would love do?

John 13:1

3) *The Holy Spirit does Guide Us*

Do you have confidence in the Holy Spirit's presence to guide you?

I Corinthians 2:9-13

John 14:15-17

A prayer for a Spirit-filled life

Father, my years on this earth have proven that I pretty well make a mess of it when I work up the energy to try to live as You require. So, Holy Spirit, take charge, empower this life as You live Yourself through me. May there be a love and a joy and a peace and a patience and a gentleness and a goodness and a self-control that comes from You. Father, I love You. I thank You for talking to me today in a very direct way. Amen.

Practice of Guidance

1) *Prayer for Indifference*

Pay attention to see if you are indifferent to anything but the will of God. If not, tell God about your concerns, your inability to let go, and ask Him to help you to become indifferent. Wait on God for this. Ask: What needs to die in me in order for God's will to come forth in my life? Is there anything I need to set aside so that I can be open to what God wants?

Philippians 3:7-11

2) *Prayer for Wisdom*

When you have been able to loosen your grip on the outcomes, pray and ask God for wisdom.

James 1:5

3) *Pay Attention*

Take time (days or weeks, whatever it takes) to notice without judging. Journal about all that you are noticing.

4) *Gather and Assess the Data*

Assess the meaning of what you are noticing.

Let us face each other!

Who is my accuser?

Let him confront me!

⁹ It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me.

Who is he that will condemn me?

They will all wear out like a garment;

the moths will eat them up.

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

¹³ See, my servant will act wisely;

he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

¹⁴ Just as there were many who were appalled at him—

his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man
and his form marred beyond human likeness—

¹⁵ so will he sprinkle many nations,

and kings will shut their mouths because of him.

For what they were not told, they will see,

and what they have not heard, they will understand.

^{53:1} Who has believed our message

and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,

and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,

nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by men,

a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces

he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴ Surely he took up our infirmities

and carried our sorrows,

yet we considered him stricken by God,

smitten by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,

and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,

each of us has turned to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted,

yet he did not open his mouth;

he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,

and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,

so he did not open his mouth.

- ³ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
- ⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope."
- ⁵ This is what God the LORD says—
he who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:
- ⁶ "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,
- ⁷ to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
- ⁸ "I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not give my glory to another
or my praise to idols.
- ⁹ See, the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;
before they spring into being
I announce them to you."

Isaiah 50:4-9

- ⁴ The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.
He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.
- ⁵ The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears,
and I have not been rebellious;
I have not drawn back.
- ⁶ I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.
- ⁷ Because the Sovereign LORD helps me,
I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.
- ⁸ He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?

Synthesize your gathered information and talk about what you are noticing with a mature, trusted Christian friend or friends and invite their feedback. Make sure to check your synthesized information against some of these questions:

Direction and Calling: How does this choice fit with the overall direction and calling of God on my life? (Remember Jeremiah's experience of calling.) Is there one word that captures my sense of calling these days? Does the current choice enable me to continue living into my calling?

Consolation and desolation: Which choice brings the deepest sense of life, inner peace and freedom (John 10:10, 2 Cor. 3:17)? Is there a growing sense of wholeness, authenticity, congruence with who I am in God? Or might this decision draw me away from God?

Scripture: Is there a particular Scripture that God is bringing to me relative to this choice? What is it saying to me?

Life of Christ: Is this choice consistent with what I know of the mind and heart of Christ and His redemptive purposes in the world?

Character growth and development: How will this direction nurture the fruit of the Spirit in me—particularly the fruit of love? What does love call for? What is God doing in my character and spiritual growth? Will this choice continue to nurture this growth?

Eternal perspective: Does this choice reflect the value of what is eternal and permanent and holds the deepest value rather than what is transient and impermanent? On my deathbed, which choice would I wish I had made?

Community: How does this choice fit with others' observations of who I am and what God is doing in my life? Am I willing to open up every facet of this decision to a trusted spiritual friend for their wisdom and insight? Is there anything in the broad tradition of the Christian faith that might inform my decision?

A prayer for clarity
Our Father, I'm grateful for Your clear message, for the way You speak to me, for the steady and consistent message from Your Word. These are crazy times in which I live. I hear voices from every corner beckoning me and wooing me and hoping to win a hearing. Lord, bring me back to the basics. Give me a sense of contentment with the truth of the Word of God. Silence those other voices and cause them to diminish, Lord, when they are so loud in my ears, so that Your message will come through loudly and clearly. Turn my attention to the importance of modeling what You would have me be in this society that needs Your truth lived out so desperately. Amen

5) Seek Inner Confirmation

As one or two paths become clear, seek inner confirmation by taking several days to "walk around as if" you had made a particular decision. Notice whether there is a sense of inner peace and freedom. Ask: Is the ego part of me at peace because I am choosing something that will keep the ego in control? Is it the fearful part of me that is at peace, because I am choosing a path that keeps me safe and secure? Or does this peace reside in the deepest, truest part of me - the part that has the capacity and willingness to be completely given over to God?

6) Just Do It!

Follow God's will to the best of your ability. God is with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in everything I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire and I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude

Service Celebrating Service

"And an argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest." (Luke 9:46) Whenever there is trouble over who is the greatest, there is trouble over who is the least. That is the crux of the matter for us, isn't it? Most of us know we will never be the greatest, just don't let us be the least.

*True service builds community. It quietly and unpretentiously goes about caring for the needs of others. It draws, binds, heals, builds.
Celebration of Discipline by Richard J. Foster*

A few questions to consider as I approach the Lord tonight for the heart of a servant:
from Celebrating the Disciplines by Richard J. Foster and Kathryn A. Yanni, pg. 150-151

Am I serving in the frantic energy of human effort, or
am I serving in sensitivity to God's promptings?
Do I wait for opportunities that seem important enough
to merit my service, or am I willing to act on any
and all opportunities that come my way?
Do I judge the value of my serving based on outcome,
or do I take delight simply in the serving?
Do I view servanthood as a role to take on and put off,
or do I accept it as a permanent life-style?
Is my service focused on building community or
glorifying my individual role in it?

A Description of the Perfect Servant

Isaiah 42:1-9

¹ "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.
² He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.