

Discernment and Decision Making in Uncertain Times
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Introduction:

- Ernie Larsen, says that it is possible to make a decision and not to act on it. However, he says, “Once we start behaving differently, we discover a new sense of hope - ourselves.”
- We all have our habits and practices of discernment and decision making, work to become more aware of them.
- Discernment has much to do with deep listening.
- Silence, solitude and contemplation develop as an inner way of being. “Silence” may not mean that there is literal silence around you.
- “Our best self” is ever waiting to be revealed just on the other side of our growing edge.

Personal, Internal Discernment

To discern - “to distinguish, to separate”

To decide - “to cut away”

- What to discern?

Discernment is always a matter of choice among multiple good options.

- When to discern?

Discernment of big questions should only occur when your life is headed on a path in an ethically good direction.

Discernment also happens in regard to smaller, decisions in daily life.

Principles of Discernment...

- In which direction are you headed along the path of life?
- Consolation (peace and hope) and desolation (anxiety and despair)
- “Clean pain” and “dirty pain”
- Resistance and Indifference

Methods for the discernment of big questions

1. Pros and cons...
2. Facing death...
3. I would tell my friend...
4. Examen of conscience

When Deciding...

- Consider/live into one side for a time. Do you have a sense of peace, hope and freedom?
- Consider/live into the other side for a time. Do you have a sense of peace, hope and freedom?
- Make a tentative choice. Pray for confirmation.
- Make the decision. Pray for confirmation.
- If there is no deep peace, back up. If you do not experience peace with your decision, postpone the decision or choose to stay on your current path. If at all possible, do not act in the midst of desolation.

Five areas of refinement for discernment and decision making in a time of uncertainty:

1. Our personal or individual discernments impact other people and we need to take this into consideration as we discern and make decisions.
2. Return to our internal sense of wisdom and interior listening and becoming more explicit about the multiple values that we hold and by which we make decisions.
3. Remember the distinction between “clean pain,” normal feelings of grief and anger due to loss or hard feelings in general, and “dirty pain” which is added stress and anxiety due to having “clean pain.”
4. Listen to *this* time, to this context
5. Explore, develop and practice approaches to communal discernment and decision making

(This list was mentioned in the Q and A.)

Principles of Decision Making, by Earnie Larsen from *Change is a Choice*

1. Nothing is different until you make a decision.
2. When you're ready to make a decision, you'll make it, and not before.
3. Be willing to ask the difficult questions.
4. It is possible to accumulate data forever.
5. It is possible to make a decision and not act on it.

6. Once you make the decision and act on it you find the action you need to take is a two-foot jump, not a two-mile jump.
7. There's no anxiety quite like indecision.
8. It is possible to play around in indecision so long that you lose the ability to choose.
9. It is normal to feel grief at the point of making a decision.
10. Once you make a decision, go for it, and don't second guess yourself.
11. You can't control the outcome of your decision, but there is nothing wrong if it turns out differently than you had hoped.
12. You can't do it alone.

IF NOTHING CHANGES, NOTHING CHANGES.

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