

# Discernment Listening Guidelines

*The goal, of spiritual discernment is to hear God's guidance.*

Take time to become settled in God's presence.

2. Listen to others with your entire self (senses, feelings, intuition, and rational faculties).
3. Speak for yourself only, expressing your own thoughts and feelings, referring to your own experiences. Avoid being hypothetical.
4. Do not challenge what others say.
5. Do not interrupt.
6. Do not formulate what you want to say while someone else is speaking.
7. Pause between speakers to absorb what has been said.
8. Listen to the group as a whole—to those who have not spoken verbally as well as to those who have; generally, leave space for anyone who may want to speak a first time before speaking a second time yourself.

## *Suggestions for Working Toward Consensus*

*Spiritual consensus is that place of unity to which the Holy Spirit has led a group. It may or may not include a decision. Christian spiritual consensus implies not merely assent, but a sense of Christ's presence among those assembled.*

1. State the issue clearly; perhaps propose a solution.
2. Proceed with sensitivity to the needs of all, including their fears and insecurities.
3. Remember that, on a given issue, some people may get out ahead while others are just awakening.
4. Sense from what depth a person may be speaking and respond accordingly.
5. Be aware that a controversial situation may touch off grieving in some people and that they may need time to work through it.
6. If clarity is not coming, take comfort that now everyone is at least wrestling with the issue. Simply stating this as an observation can, on occasion, release the meeting to move forward.
7. Keep in mind that God speaks through those in the minority as well as those in the majority.
8. Always look for ways of bringing together strands from differing views.
9. On occasion, it can help to check out where the group is at that moment by asking, "Where do you think we are now?"
10. Be ready to work with the pressure of dead- lines; also be open to delaying action.
11. As an issue is considered, it may become clear that it involves several components, each of which ought to be considered separately.
12. If consensus seems to be emerging, you can ask the group to either affirm or modify your understanding (for instance, "Are we in consensus that...?"), and listen to the responses for further clarity.
13. If there is apparent dissent, but a strong desire or need to take action, ask if the reservations are sufficiently strong to prevent action.

Many business matters are not controversial, and consensus may be obvious without any special effort.

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