



**Seeing with the Heart: A Guide to Navigating Life's Adventures**, by Kevin O'Brien, SJ

### **Week 5--Chapter 8, Living with Discernment**

**Check in Question:** Describe the last decision you made that required you to use the technique of discernment.

#### **Opening Prayer**

Lord God,

in the quiet of this moment, I come before You seeking clarity and truth.

Amid the many voices that pull at my heart, help me to recognize Your gentle whisper.

Grant me the grace to discern what is of You and what is not.

Where there is confusion, bring light;

where there is fear, grant trust;

where there is haste, teach me patience.

Shape my desires so they align with Your will,  
and give me the courage to follow where You lead,  
even when the path is uncertain.

May Your Spirit guide my thoughts, my choices, and my steps,  
so that in all things, I may grow closer to You  
and live in the freedom of Your truth.

Amen.

#### **Reflection questions:**

*At the end of every chapter, Fr. Kevin suggests an Ignatian style of journaling through reflection questions. These questions may be helpful for personal prayer or for conversation within your faith-sharing group. However, we have also created a few additional questions that we hope will be especially fruitful for your discussion together as a group while journeying through Seeing with the Heart by Kevin O'Brien. For our faith-sharing time, select one or two questions that resonate with you and share your thoughts with the group.*

#### **Chapter 8: Living with Discernment**

1. Pope Francis reminds us that discernment is not just self-reflection, but a movement beyond ourselves toward God's will. How does this challenge the way you usually think

about discernment? In what practical ways might you be invited to “leave yourself behind” so you can better serve others and live out God’s mission?

2. Fr. Kevin shares, “If the bad spirit cannot lead us into sin or break relationships, it will try to take away our joy.” Can you recall a time when your joy was diminished or taken from you? What was happening in your life, and how did it affect your faith or relationships?
3. Father Kevin says the Holy Spirit is often found in moments of deep peace, hope, and loving connection. When have you experienced these signs in your own life? How did you recognize that it might be the Holy Spirit at work?
4. A friend of Father Kevin shared that healing began only when they honestly acknowledged their struggle and invited others in. Have you ever supported someone on a journey of healing (such as a 12-step program or similar path)? What did that experience teach you about honesty, vulnerability, or community?

## **Closing Prayer**

For whom and what shall we pray...

*For this closing prayer, we are going to do a little discernment.*

- *Begin by lighting a candle as a visual reminder that we are gathered in God’s presence.*
- *If you have some jazz music or FM on the radio dial 105.87 perhaps play it.*
- *Invite everyone to think of something they are working on, a decision, a life change, or...*
- *The leader or facilitator will then read the guided reflection slowly. Faith sharers may choose to follow along with the text or close their eyes in quiet contemplation.*
- *Encourage everyone to listen, reflect, and allow the words to speak to their own experiences of God.*

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Take a slow, deep breath in... and out. Allow your body to relax. Let your thoughts settle, letting go of distractions. Feel your heart open to this sacred moment.

*Pause*

The art of discernment is like playing jazz—an adventurous, improvisational form of music. Musicians begin with a familiar melody, then adapt as they listen and respond to one another, allowing the music to evolve. No two performances are the same because improvisation is at the heart of jazz, shaped by both individual skill and shared awareness.

In a similar way, discernment is how we “improvise” with God and others. Rather than following a fixed script, we listen, respond, and allow God’s Spirit to guide us in the moment.

*Pause*

Take a slow, deep breath in... and gently let it out.

Again, breathe in... and release.

Let your breathing become steady, calm, and natural.

*Pause*

Now imagine you are in a quiet, intimate jazz club. The lights are low. There is a small stage in front of you. You can hear the soft murmur of anticipation.

On the stage, a simple melody begins—familiar, steady, like the rhythms of your daily life. This melody represents where you are right now... your routines, your thoughts, your current situation.

Take a moment to notice:

What does your “melody” feel like today?

*Pause*

Now, gently bring to mind the decision you are facing.

Don't rush it. Simply let it come into your awareness.

As you hold this decision, notice what arises within you—without judgment.

Is there tension? Peace? Confusion? Hope?

*Pause*

In this jazz scene, another instrument begins to play. Perhaps it is a piano... or a saxophone. This new sound represents the movement of the Holy Spirit—subtle, creative, inviting.

In jazz, the musicians do not follow a rigid script. They listen. They respond. They trust.

They improvise together.

Imagine yourself now as one of the musicians.

God is not handing you a fixed sheet of music.

God is inviting you to play.

*Pause*

Listen closely.

Where do you sense harmony?

Where does the music feel peaceful, spacious, alive?

Stay there for a moment...

Now notice if there is any part of the music that feels tight, forced, or out of rhythm.

Without judging it, simply recognize it.

*Pause*

In jazz, the musicians rely on two things: their practice... and their listening.

You, too, have been formed—by your faith, your experiences, your love for others.

Trust that this “practice” is within you.

Now ask quietly in your heart:

*God, where are You in this decision?*

Pause... and listen.

*Pause*

Perhaps no clear answer comes—and that's okay.

In jazz, the next note is not always known ahead of time.

Discernment is not about getting everything perfectly right.

It is about staying in relationship... staying attentive... staying open.

*Pause*

Now imagine yourself playing a note—taking a small step toward one of your options.

How does it sound?

Does it bring a sense of peace, even if it feels a little uncertain? Or does it feel heavy, closed, or restless?

Let your heart notice.

*Pause*

Now try the other possibility. Play that note.

What do you notice now?

*Pause*

Remember, in jazz, no one plays alone.

You are surrounded—by God, by the wisdom of others, by a community that listens with you.

You are not alone in this music.

*Pause*

Take a deep breath in...

and slowly breathe out.

Gently place your decision into God's hands.

Lord, help me to listen.

Help me to trust.

Help me to follow the music You are creating in my life.

*Pause*

Rest for a moment in that trust...

in that quiet...

in that presence.

*Pause*

When you are ready, begin to bring your awareness back to the room.

Feel your body... your breath...

And gently open your eyes.

Go forward knowing that discernment is not about having all the answers—

but about learning to play, listen, and walk with God in the unfolding music of your life.

This is our final session together.

Some groups continue meeting year-round—perhaps your group would like to stay together through the Easter season or reconnect during Advent. We also offer many resources and other groups if you're interested in continuing your faith-sharing journey. For more information, please contact Dawn at [dponnet@holyfamily.org](mailto:dponnet@holyfamily.org) or 626-403-6128.