

Week #5

A Word from Scott

Randolph: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/1q200qu8qqjfhgljg4kvr/Week-5-Leader-Video-Scott.mp4?rlkey=a6jud2fn4g36bbdto3maheicu&st=2180cgds&dl=0>

TIME IN THE WORD:

RE-READ AND REFLECT ON JOHN CHAPTER 9

Ask God to show you where in the story you are. Are you most like the disciples, the Pharisees, the neighbors, the parents, or some combination? How does this manifest itself in your own personal discernment and in your leadership discernment?

As you become aware of the obstacles that prevent you from seeing the works of God and joining God in his work, confess this to God. Listen for how God might be inviting you to move beyond your own obstacles to seeing—both personally and in your discernment with others in community.

Making Sense of It All

The good news is that even though the healed man lost his place in the group, he found Jesus—or to be more accurate, Jesus found him—which is one of the most beautiful parts of the story. When Jesus heard that the Jews had driven him out of their community, he went to find the man. This was a great kindness because even though this man had been given the gift of restored sight, his good fortune and his spiritual clarity had now isolated him.

He needed to understand what had happened and where he stood in relation to the community he had been a part of all his life. He needed to understand why, on this miraculous day, he found himself outside the religious community for being honest about what had happened to him. While finding oneself on the outside can be traumatic at first, the healed man discovered it can also be a place of encounter. Away from the soul-numbing clamor of the religious community and all the ways they wanted to interpret and manipulate his experience, the healed man was finally able to reflect on all that had happened to him. And Jesus, who knew what an unsettling day it had been, was there to help him piece it all together and take him the rest of the way on his journey toward full faith.

In fact, Jesus seemed to think that those who have been expelled in this way actually have a head start in understanding his message because they had been expelled from what was unreal anyway.[1] “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” Jesus gently asked. “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” “You have seen him (such good news!), and the one speaking with you is he.” After such a long and wearying day, and after waiting so long for a place to rest his soul, the healed man simply and finally gave himself over to his deepest knowing. “‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped him.”

Then Jesus gave him one more gift—helping him to further interpret the events of this day. He said, “I have come into this world to give sight to the blind and to make blind those who see.” It was

pretty clear that the healed man was in the first category, but the Pharisees were more than a little concerned about where Jesus' comment put them in the whole scheme of things. "Surely we are not blind, are we?" To which Jesus replied, "You know, it would be better for you if you were. If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains." This is the punch line of the whole story: those who admit their blindness see. Those who are convinced that they see and stubbornly refuse to admit their need for healing will not be able to see anything new. This story shows us that true discernment has very humble beginnings. It starts with the admission that we are not all that good at seeing.

WEEK #5 PRACTICE: *Revisit a practice from Weeks 1 to 4*

Corporate discernment begins with attending to the spiritual formation of each individual leader. Romans 12–15, in particular, is focused on how we are to live out our faith in practical ways with each other in community, and it is in this context that Paul says: "In order for this thing called the body of Christ to work, each of you must resist the process of being conformed to this world and enter into a process of spiritual transformation so that together you can discern and do the will of God" (my paraphrase).

Groups determined to pursue God's will together must begin by focusing on the dynamic of spiritual transformation in the lives of individuals who comprise the group. The temptation, of course, is to skip the necessary prework and get on with the business of discernment.

As you continue this 40-day journey, you are encouraged to revisit one of the practices from the past 4 weeks. Perhaps one that challenged you most or one where you found deeper intimacy with God. As apprentices of Jesus, we observe him repeatedly retreating into quiet places for personal communion and conversation with the Father.

Here are the 4 practices that have been shared:

- **Prayer:**
 - o *Prayer of Quiet Trust* as described in Psalm 31
 - o *Prayer for indifference* as demonstrated by Mary ("may it be unto me as you have said") and Jesus ("not my will but yours be done")
 - o *Prayer for Wisdom* as written in James ("if any of you lack wisdom, ask God")
- **Engaging the Scriptures:** *lectio divina*
- **Solitude & Silence:** Withdrawing from our lives and our many distractions in order to give God complete access to our souls. [CLICK HERE](#) to be guided through this exercise
- **Self-knowledge / Self-examination:** "search me and know me," as David expressed in Psalm 139

Reflect on these statements and questions and take time to journal about your reflections:

- Discernment at the leadership level begins with the spiritual transformation of each individual leader as they engage in disciplines that enable them to regularly offer themselves—body and soul—to God.
- How disciplined or undisciplined are you in offering your time and attention to God so that you can be transformed?
- Consider the life rhythms that keep you healthy and thriving. Similarly, what rhythms or patterns of spiritual practices are shaping your spiritual life?

* Content excerpted from: Barton, Ruth Haley. Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups (Transforming Resources) (Chapters 1-2).