



EQUIPPER

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Dear ministers on journey with Jesus,

We are grateful that the Holy Spirit communicates to us God's love and life. He does so in many ways, including leading us to participate in what Jesus is doing to fulfill the Father's mission to the world. We want to follow the Spirit's lead into mission with Jesus, but how do we go about hearing his voice? Let's note some important points.

First, we understand that the Holy Spirit speaks to us in multiple ways, including through Scripture and experience. Secondly, we acknowledge that different people (with unique personalities, experiences and spiritual gifts) hear the Spirit in different ways.



Given this diversity, is it possible for a congregation or a ministry team to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to the group? The answer is *yes*, and according to author Ruth Haley Barton (in an article we excerpt and link on page two), church leaders can facilitate a group's hearing by using a *community spiritual discernment process*. According to Barton, doing so is a key leadership responsibility:

At the heart of spiritual leadership is discernment—the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and activity of God both personally and in community.

I encourage you to investigate this topic—the resources on page two are helpful. Please consider how a community spiritual discernment process might be useful in your congregation.

At each of the 2012 U.S. regional conferences, we will utilize prayer and discussion to facilitate group discernment. I hope you will attend one of these conferences (the first occurs later this month in Ontario, CA). For information about all the conferences, see the events page on the GCI website at <http://www.gci.org/event/11/conferences>

Listening with you,

Dan Rogers, superintendent of U.S. ministers

***Can You Hear the Holy Spirit?* by Joseph Tkach**

Paul tells us that those who are led by the Holy Spirit are the children of God (Romans 8:14). We should expect the Holy Spirit to lead us, and we need to know how he does it.

God works in different ways with different people. He spoke in different ways to Adam, Abraham, Moses, Deborah, Samuel, Elijah, Mary and Paul. He can speak in different ways to us today.



To read more, go to <http://www.gci.org/disc/14-hear>

***Discerning God's Voice* by Ruth Haley Barton**

A spiritual leader is someone able to guide the discernment process so the community can sense God's desire for them and move forward on that basis.

Yet discernment does not take place in a vacuum, nor by accident. Spiritual community is the context for discernment, so the first move in cultivating a culture of discernment is to establish the leadership group as a community for discernment.



This means our life together is grounded in prayer and intentional spiritual practices, such as reading and reflecting on Scripture, silence, listening, worship and intercession, self-examination and confession.

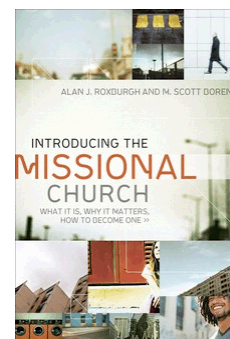
This is the container for the discernment process. It is a means of creating space for God's activity in our lives. It is one way we can make ourselves available so that he can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. By practicing discernment in community, we open ourselves to the wisdom of God that is beyond human wisdom but is available to us when we ask for it.

To read more, go to <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/summer/1.90.html>

***The Holy Spirit Leads Us In Mission* (Missional network blog post)**

“The early church stayed in Jerusalem before persecution forced them to move out and spread the Word,” the authors say. “It wasn’t a plan or strategy. It was the Spirit breaking their boundaries. We aren’t promoting persecution, but we want the churches to be aware that the Spirit is always shaping something greater than we can imagine.

“There is nothing wrong with attracting people to church but that shouldn’t be the goal. God is at work to redeem creation and God invites us to join that mission. Instead of asking ‘How do we attract people to what we are doing,’ we should ask ‘what is God up to in this neighborhood?’ and join those things.”



To read more of this article, which reviews the book, *Introducing the Missional Church*, go to http://www.roxburghmissionalnet.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=%2082&Itemid=118