



is a Mission
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loves journeying
with people as
they discern their
unique calling in
God's mission.

Keen to explore what's next?
Contact Jodie or Chris to find out more about tailored mission coaching and discernment retreats. There is a team at Baptist Mission Australia ready to reflect and journey with you.

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Some years ago, my husband Chris and I were invited to join a Christian community that lived and worked among the poor in Bangkok. We were full of fervour and passion, and ready to follow Jesus wherever He wanted us to go, but I recall feeling completely overwhelmed with the enormity of this decision

Was God really inviting me to relocate my life, together with my children, to a marginalised community with a reputation for violence and neglect? Where do I even begin to make such a decision? What if I get it wrong? How can I tell the difference between my dreams and what God has for me?

Discerning God's will for our lives can feel like an impossible task. It can feel like we are left to navigate an unknown path without a map. But does it need to be like this? Or can we frame discernment in a way that is as freeing as God's love and acceptance of us?

According to Ruth Haley Barton, discernment is our "capacity to recognise and respond to the presence and the activity of God - both in the ordinary moments and in the larger decisions of our lives."

It is about having eyes to see God at work in and around us. It is recognising the ways God has shaped us, and uniquely placed us in the world.

And it requires patience, as we listen to the still, quiet voice of the Spirit, revealing the work of God in our past and what He may be inviting us into for the future.

When we were faced with the enormity of our decision to relocate to live among the poorest in Bangkok, we began a period of discernment. It was a process that began with trusting that God wanted to show Himself to us, and was inviting us to join with Him in something new. We carved out time away from the busyness of our day-to-day lives, to still our hearts and minds and listen to what God might be saying, but just as importantly, we invited friends and family to join with us in our discerning, and to speak into this decision.

At the end of our discernment period, there were no lightning bolts or audible words from heaven. But there was a collective peace and assurance that God was for us, and with us, whatever the next step was.

When we take time to look back at our lives, we can see that God has been gently guiding us at each turn. He has been preparing us for this place and these people.

Parker Palmer helpfully suggests, "before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am."

Perhaps life-changing decisions about God's will need not cause fear or panic, but rather hopeful anticipation of seeing God at work in us. Perhaps, the task of discernment in our calling or vocation is more about faithfully and boldly following the threads of our lives that have led us to that point.

In our pursuit to discern the will of God we may not hear a clear voice from heaven, but we can trust that the God who revealed Himself to us in Jesus will continue to guide us in our pursuit of Him.

When facing times of discernment may we be filled with faith like the Psalmist, boldly declaring, "I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants" (Psalm 85:8a).