

MENTOR GUIDE

MODULE 8: CALLING AND DISCERNMENT

INTRODUCTION



In this module, **Connie Willems** defines calling and vocation and describes how you can live out your God-given vocation in every stage of your life.



Then, **Jared Boyd** teaches a simple framework for practicing discernment in the everyday decisions of your life.

This module's teaching will help you answer two central questions:

1. How do I identify and live out my God-given vocation?
2. How can I learn to discern God's will in the decisions of my life?

SESSION 1: DISCOVERING YOUR CALLING

Video Notes

- 1. Vocation involves being: who you are and what you carry from and about God; and doing: how you live that out.** (Romans 16). Sometimes, how you live out your calling from God and what earns you money align, but sometimes they are different. The interplay between who you are (being) and how you live it out (doing) influences the roles you fill in your lifetime.
- 2. You identify your vocation by paying attention to what attributes of God you uniquely carry.** Are there parts of you that feel completely ordinary that people comment on as unique? Do you have any giftings that are so powerful, they've gotten you into trouble or you're getting sick of them, or they've created trouble for others? Are there places where you're entirely aware of your humanity and brokenness, but something from God keeps happening there anyway?
- 3. As you consider vocation, you should expect the following:**
 - Your vocation may feel ordinary because it comes so naturally.
 - You need others to help you discern your vocation. (*God's vocational invitation may not match the norms of your family or culture.*)
 - Your vocation will need to be matured.
 - Your vocation will look different from the inside than from the outside.
 - You will express your vocation in different ways throughout your life.
- 4. Ways to get started discerning vocation:**
 - Do the thing in front of you, in the life you already have.
 - Do the thing in front of you, as you.
 - Do the thing in front of you, with God.
 - Accumulate snapshots. Look for consolation. Ask God to help you notice and experience the sweet spot, the goodness, when you experience it.
 - Above all, dwell, abide, remain in Jesus, the vine. (John 15:5).

SESSION 1: DISCOVERING YOUR CALLING

Participant Reflection Questions

After watching the video, participants will answer or journal the following questions for reflection. Feel free to utilize these questions for discussion at your next Coaching Session.

- 1.** Connie teaches that vocation is a combination of being and doing. How is this description of vocation different from how you may have described it previously? What do you like about Connie's definition?

What do you find challenging about this concept of vocation?

What feels life-giving or exciting to you about this concept of vocation?

- 2.** You can get a clearer idea of your God-given vocation by paying attention to what feels natural.

What is something people have noticed about you that you don't even realize you're doing because it feels so natural?

- 3.** Vocation looks different at different stages of life. Consider the stage of life you are in right now. What does the process of discerning vocation look like for you right now? How is that different from how you explored vocation in a previous life stage?

- 4.** Connie teaches that a big part of vocation is doing what you are doing with God and following God's next step. How do you invite God into decisions about what you do?

How would you like to grow in dwelling in God as you make these decisions?

SESSION 1: ACTIVITY

1. Tell some stories about your vocation or calling, as best you can from what you know now. If writing is your thing, write a few paragraphs. If you prefer to talk it out, record a voice memo or video.

To get you started, answer this question: *What are three or four key experiences that show your vocation in action—or that you think might show it, even if you're not certain?*

But here's the catch: Try to do it without talking about your work or your job. Talk about your life outside of work, your life as a child, or something you did simply because you're you.

It may be hard not to reference work, especially if you've had one or more jobs that are closely connected to your vocation, or if you consider being a stay-at-home parent your vocation. But try it out anyway. This will give you practice in identifying the “being” part of your vocation—the unique gifting and calling you bring with you into any setting.

2. Then ask two other people who know you well to tell you what they have seen in you that points to your vocation. Ask them one or two of these questions:
 - What spiritual gifts have you seen me use?
 - What gifts do I bring to our church?
 - When do you see me come alive or become passionate in a way that's totally “me”?
 - What have you come to know about God through me?

3. Ask God about your vocation. Give God space to answer the same kinds of questions for you. Write down what you sense Him communicating, even if you're not certain you're hearing accurately. Then talk to a mentor or someone else in the VLE course about what you've heard and invite them to help you discern what is from God. Ask God one or two of these questions:

- What gifts have You given me that I get to use on Your behalf?
- What gifts do I bring to Your church?
- Would you bring to mind a time when I've come alive or become passionate in a way that's totally "me"?
- What understanding have You given me about who You are, that I get to bring to others?

SESSION 2: THE BASICS OF DISCERNMENT

Video Notes

- 1. Discernment is the art of finding God's will in the concrete life situations that confront us.** If you're trying to follow Jesus with your life, this means you're orienting your life around the assumption that Jesus is the one leading you. And so this assumption, that God is leading you and you are following, or at least attempting to follow Him, carries with it an underlying reality that you're trying to pay attention to how God might be leading.
- 2. The first step in the discernment process is getting clear and gathering the facts.** If the discernment process that you are in is related to a specific decision you are facing, ask, "What are the actual choices in front of me?" Then, get curious about who those choices will impact, and how each of these choices might affect people differently. Finally, pay attention to the feelings that emerge as you think about the possible outcomes of your decision.
- 3. Then, you pay attention to two movements: consolation and desolation.** As you grow in intimacy with God, you grow in your capacity to notice how God is moving in your life.

Consolation is when you feel increased faith, hope, and love. It can feel like a quiet, settled steadiness inside your soul. The Holy Spirit uses consolation to lead you toward the things God is doing.

Desolation is that interior movement and experience where our faith, hope, and love feel like they're in low supply. Desolation can include feelings of doubt, fear, and discouragement.

Discernment comes from noticing the movements of consolation and desolation and recognizing the impact of those interior movements on your thinking. The enemy, primarily using desolation, wants to confuse you, discourage you, and lead you away from the things of God.

- 4. Next, you pay attention to three scenarios: smooth sailing, conflicting winds, and no wind.** If you imagine yourself sailing in a small sailboat, you can think of the movements of consolation and desolation in terms of the presence or absence of a steady, helpful wind in your sails.

Feeling filled with consolation is like a wind at your back, filling you with joy as you consider your decision. This scenario happens in the discernment process, but is not the most common.

More likely is the feeling of gusty winds of consolation countered with those of desolation: excitement or joy followed by discouragement or anxiety. Much of the work of discernment feels like this because of what it is to partner with God: the Holy Spirit is active, trying to guide with energy and faith, and the enemy is trying to put up obstacles and headwinds to prevent that progress. In this scenario, it is important to seek the wisdom of others, and, many times, to lower the anchor and wait on the decision until clarity comes.

The final scenario is when there is no wind; when there is a decision in front of you and you don't have clear movements of consolation or desolation. In these situations, God may be giving you the freedom to decide.

5. Finally, seek confirmation (James 4:6). Once you've gathered the facts, paid attention to the movements of consolation and desolation, and sorted out which of the possible scenarios you are experiencing, the final step is to seek confirmation.

You seek confirmation from God by asking Him to stir up some wind, to give courage and energy, or to dry it up.

You seek confirmation from others by sharing the decision with those who have been with you throughout the process. While sometimes these people may show you things you have missed, most often the people who have walked with you through the process can affirm and support your decision.

SESSION 2: THE BASICS OF DISCERNMENT

Participant Reflection Questions

- 1.** What decision, direction, or sense of calling are you currently trying to discern in your life? How clear or confusing does that situation feel to you right now?
- 2.** What strong desires, fears, or attachments might be influencing how you're viewing this decision? Are there things you're holding too tightly that might be clouding your freedom to follow God's will?
- 3.** As you think about your options, where do you notice feelings of consolation (peace, hope, joy, love) or desolation (fear, discouragement, confusion)?
- 4.** Which discernment "scenario" do you most relate to right now—clear wind at your back, swirling conflicting winds, or stillness? How does that help you understand what kind of discernment work you may need next?
- 5.** Have you shared your discernment process with trusted friends, mentors, or spiritual directors? What kind of confirmation or insight might community offer you at this point?

ACTIVATION ASSIGNMENT

Put This Into Practice

This module was about discovering your vocation and discerning how God invites you to live that out. Completing this module also marks a turning point in your VLE journey. You've arrived at the end of VLE: Foundations. This activation assignment is designed to help you explore the question, "What's next?"

- Let's start at the beginning - how did you see yourself, your gifting, your calling at that time?
- How have you seen that shift, change, or growth in your two years of VLE?
- What do you know about yourself now that you were not yet aware of when you began VLE?
- What have you learned about God in your two years of VLE?

Consolation is when you feel increased faith, hope, and love. It can feel like a quiet, settled steadiness inside your soul. The Holy Spirit uses consolation to lead you toward the things God is doing.

Desolation is that interior movement and experience where our faith, hope, and love feel like they're in low supply. Desolation can include feelings of doubt, fear, and discouragement.

- When have you experienced consolation over the past two years of VLE?
- What has felt like wind at your back, or particularly inspiring or life-giving?
- When have you experienced desolation?
- When have you felt discouraged or attacked in the past two years?
- Have you noticed any patterns of consolation and desolation in your relationships, work, or ministry over the past two years that you want to pay attention to moving forward?

To the best of your ability, complete the following:

- What do you think God is inviting you into in the next season of your life?
- What is one step you could take in the coming month to move in that direction?
- How can your VLE mentor continue to support you in this process?

MENTOR SESSION GUIDE

While the content we've provided will be impactful for participants, as a VLE mentor, the time you spend helping participants process will be transformative. Please use this time to make thoughtful observations and be prepared to speak into their lives. This time together will provide many opportunities to have an "ICNU (I See In You) Conversation", which will be catalytic in their growth and development! Here is a sample agenda you might consider using for your time together:

Connection (5-10 minutes). This is a great opportunity for small talk, to warm up the conversation. You can ask how their week has been, or if they have anything exciting coming up.

Celebration (5-10 minutes). Ask them if they have seen God do something in their lives or ministry in the past two weeks that they'd like to share. This is an opportunity for you to affirm and reinforce the good growth that is happening.

Coaching Conversation (40 minutes). See Coaching Conversation Section on the next page. This portion will be specific to each module.

Care & Prayer (10-20 minutes). As you wrap up your time together, make space for the work of the Holy Spirit. This could look different every time, especially if you are meeting with an individual versus a group. If you are with an individual, you could ask if the Holy Spirit has brought anything to the surface for them, and then pray into that. If you are with a group, this might be an opportunity for a hot seat, or for participants to break off into pairs and pray for each other.

Closing Communication (5 minutes). This is the time to highlight the next module, important church events, or announcements, etc.

MODULE 8: COACHING CONVERSATION

Module 8: Discernment & Vocation invites leaders to seek God’s voice in their ongoing journey of calling. This module provides tools for discernment, explores how vocation is both general and specific, and encourages participants to align their lives with what God is doing in the world. Rather than a destination, calling is presented as a dynamic, relational unfolding—one that involves listening, surrender, and courageous obedience.

1. Start the conversation by sharing part of your calling journey.

- How have you discerned God’s leading in different seasons?
- What helped you move forward when you felt uncertain or unqualified?

2. Next, take some time to reflect on the Activation Assignment together by asking:

- What insights did you gain from the discernment tools this month?
- Was there a theme, question, or Scripture that resonated with your current season?
- How are you sensing God’s invitation toward a specific next step?

3. Now, let’s unpack a few core themes from the module. Guide your discussion with prompts like:

- God’s call is relational: What does it look like to listen for God in your real life—not just in big decisions?
- Vocation is broader than career: How does your sense of calling show up in family, neighborhood, or church?
- Ongoing discernment: What rhythms help you stay in tune with God’s voice?

4. Explore how this material applies to current leadership roles and areas of ministry by asking:

- How is your leadership being shaped by what God is calling you into right now?
- What's one fear or barrier that you want to surrender to say yes to God's call?
- How can you encourage others to discern and walk in their unique callings?

5. Wrap up with prayer and commissioning. This can be a really special and momentous time with your participant(s). We encourage you to *spend some time before this conversation* to pray for your participants and see if God might give you any discernment of calling for them. This will be an excellent opportunity to have a big ICNU conversation and then bless what you see in them!

- Ask the Holy Spirit to speak clearly and personally about each participant's next step.
- Pray a blessing of courage, clarity, and joy over their calling.
- If you are in a group setting, consider having a hot seat for each participant, where group members share words of affirmation and prophetic encouragement.