



## Digital Commons @ George Fox University

---

Discernment Resources

The Congregational Discernment Project

---

2002

### **Attending, Discerning, Minding**

Paul Anderson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/discernmentresources>

---

# Attending, Discerning, Minding

Paul Anderson

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father...thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," he was not just teaching them a poetic utterance to be recited. He was describing God's burning desire for the world. God desires nothing short of a human/divine partnership in which God's will and pleasure are carried out in the course of everyday life-as perfectly on earth as they are in Heaven.

This is the calling of all believers everywhere, and Friends have sought for three and a half centuries to make that calling central to all we do. Basically, it involves three parts: attending, discerning and minding.

**Attending.** That's what we do in worship, both individually and corporately. What are your first thoughts in the morning? Do you say, "Good morning, Lord!" or "Goodness gracious; it's morning!"? Do you begin your day offering your life to God anew, rehearsing your commitments and obligations in the light of God's presence? Do you attend the gentle promptings of the Spirit throughout the day, seeking always to be responsive to what John Woolman called "a motion of love," which is the Holy Spirit?

Attending is also what we do in the gathered meeting for worship. In worship, we express our love for God and receive God's love for us. That's where transformation happens. In worship we may enjoy inspiring music and moving words, but our goal is ever to attend the Living Word of God which addresses us through the music, the spoken word, and ultimately the silence. This is why our time of "Communion after the manner of Friends" is so important. It is here-in this sacramental context-where our attending the transforming Word of the Present Christ becomes most acute. Like a corporate altar call, the lives of all-not just a demonstrative few-resonate with the classic invitational: "Just as I am...I come." Here it is that we listen for, tune in to, and attend the Life-giving Word of God, addressing each of us and our condition.

**Discerning.** That's what we hope happens because of our attentiveness to the Divine Will. "Is this a divine impression, or just a new idea?" "Does this impression conform to Scripture and what we believe to be the will and way of Christ?" "Is this a message for me alone, or is it a leading for others too?" These are the sort of questions that emerge as we seek to distinguish the Lord's promptings from otherwise worthy notions.

Discerning happens as we identify the singular Voice of God among the clamoring many voices-both inward and outward-and it begins and ends with the Cross. When we lay our concerns and interests before the Cross of Jesus, we begin to see with new eyes. And yet, this is also a paradox. Only by dying do we live; only by releasing to we receive. As we release our interests back to God, we find ourselves better enabled to see persons and situations as Jesus would. Out of that renewed vision, then, emerge the seeds of discernment.

***Minding.*** After we attend and discern the divine will, the question of obedience follows. Will we also heed, and will we do so responsively? Minding the divine will, again, hinges upon an affirmative disposition toward God. The life lived in an ongoing "Yes" toward God will always result in trust and obedience. Trust, because it assumes God is at work in the world beyond what the eye can see; obedience, because it has developed a habitual pattern of attentive and joyous responsiveness to the Holy Spirit's promptings.

The Lord's Prayer was given by Jesus not simply as a saying to be memorized, but as a pattern to be lived. It represents the eternal will of God, which is for the divine will to be carried out as perfectly on earth as it is in Heaven. But it happens dynamically, not statically. God's will for humanity is neither a schedule, a blueprint, nor a list of legal requirements. It is a spiritual and relational reality, which all authentic believers have long embraced. It involves attending, discerning and minding the present leadership of the Resurrected Lord.

When this happens, all things indeed become new, and the Lord's Prayer...is answered.